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SEVERAL

DISCOURSES

PREACHED AT THE

TEMPLE CHURCH.

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By *THO. SHERLOCK*, D. D.

Late Maſter of the TEMPLE,

Now Lord Biſhop of LONDON.

Vol. I

LONDON:

Printed for J. WHISTON and B. WHITE at *Boyle's-Head*, W. OWEN at *Homer's-Head*, both in *Fleet-Street*, and E. BAKER at *Tunbridge*.

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M.DCC.LVIII.

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DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE I.

PART I.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Who, being in the Form of God, thought it not Robbery to be equal with God: But made himſelf of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of Men: And being found in Faſhion as a Man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs. Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name, which is above every Name: That at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth; and that every Tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.

THE Words now read to you have been ſtrongly debated by Chriſtians differing in Opinion about the Perſon and Dignity of our bleſſed Saviour; and, as they are often handled, lead more certainly

to the Knowledge of the Interpreter's Opinion than of the Apoſtle's.

I intend not to preſs them into the Service of any particular Opinion, but fairly to expound them; and to infer nothing from them, but what may evidently be ſhewn to be in them, even by the Neceſſity of the Apoſtle's Argument. To avoid Obſcurity and Confuſion, I ſhall proceed in the following Method:

Firſt, I ſhall repreſent to you the Apoſtle's Argument entire and by itſelf.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider the ſeveral Things implied in it; which, with reſpect to this particular Argument, we may call the Principles upon which the Apoſtle reaſons.

Thirdly, By comparing one Part with another, I ſhall endeavour to lay before you the true Senſe and Meaning of each Part.

Firſt then, I ſhall repreſent to you the Apoſtle's Argument entire and by itſelf.

At the Beginning of this ſecond Chapter, St. *Paul* exhorts the *Philippians* to be at Peace and Unity among themſelves, to love one another, and to be of the ſame Mind, mutually aiding and aſſiſting each other in all Things. Hear his own Words: *If there*

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be therefore any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind. And then, like a wiſe Phyſician, he ſearches to the Bottom of the Evil, which he would cure; and, well knowing that Pride and Vain-Glory are the perpetual Sources of Strife and Contention, the Bane of mutual Love and Charity, he exhorts them to fly from theſe Evils, preſſes them to Lowlineſs of Mind, and admoniſhes them not to over-value themſelves, nor undervalue others; but that they ſhould practiſe Humility towards one another, each eſteeming other better than themſelves. Thus far he advances in the two next Verſes: *Let nothing be done through Strife or Vain-Glory; but, in Lowlineſs of Mind, let each eſteem other better than themſelves: Look not every Man on his own Things, but every Man alſo on the Things of others.*

To ſupport this Doctrine, and to enforce their Obedience to it, he ſets before them the Example of Chriſt; and in lively Colours repreſents his great Humility: He ſhews them how much below himſelf he

deſcended for their ſakes; how truly great he was, and how truly low he made himſelf; by Nature, how much higher than the higheſt; by Choice, how much lower than the loweſt. *Let this Mind*, ſays he, *be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus; who, being in the Form of God, thought it not Robbery to be equal with God; but made himſelf of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of Men: And being found in Faſhion as a Man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs.* And that their Obedience might want no due Encouragement, he ſets before them, from the ſame Example, what glorious Rewards they might promiſe themſelves hereafter, for their preſent Humility and Lowlineſs of Mind: For this abandoned, this crucified Jeſus, was not left to ſink under the Obſcurity of his voluntary Humility; but, as a Reward of his Humility and Sufferings, he was raiſed to the higheſt Pitch of Dignity and Power: *Wherefore*, ſays he, *God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name, which is above every Name: That at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things on Earth, and Things under the Earth;*

and that every Tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father. This then is the whole of the Apoſtle's Argument.

Let us now, in the Second Place, conſider the ſeveral Things implied in it; which, with reſpect to this particular Argument, we may call the Principles upon which the Apoſtle reaſons.

And firſt you may obſerve, That the Apoſtle here evidently points out to us three different States and Conditions of Chriſt: The firſt is his State of Dignity, from which he willingly deſcended, expreſſed in thoſe Words, *Who being in the Form of God:* The ſecond is the State of Humility, to which he deſcended, in thoſe Words, *He made himſelf of no Reputation:* The third is his State of Glory and Exaltation, intimated in thoſe Words, *Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him.* Theſe three States or Conditions of Chriſt are eſſential to the Apoſtle's Argument: For take away any one of them, and the Example which the Apoſtle would propoſe is loſt; not only the Force of the Argument is leſſened, but the Argument itſelf entirely deſtroyed. For Inſtance: If you remove the firſt State, that of his natural Dignity and Excellence, the

ſecond State will be no longer a State of Humiliation, nor Chriſt any longer an Example of Humility: For, if he was not better than a Servant before he was a Servant, his being a Servant was his Lot and Condition, not his Choice; it was owing to the Order of Nature and Providence, and not to his Humility; and he was no more humble in being born to be a Servant, than others are who are born to the ſame State; and often too without the Humility which is proper and neceſſary to their Condition.

Secondly, It is implied in the Argument, That he was in Poſſeſſion of whatever belonged to his State of Dignity and Excellence, before he underwent any thing that belonged to his State of Humiliation: For his voluntarily deſcending from his Dignity, to a lower and meaner Condition, is the very Act and real Ground and Foundation of his Humility; and therefore whatever is meant by his being in the Form of God, or whatever is meant by his being made in the Likeneſs of Men, thus much at leaſt is evident, that he was in the Form of God, before he was made in the Likeneſs of Men; becauſe his being made in the Likeneſs of Men is given as one great Inſtance

of his Humility: But his being in the Form of God was his very Dignity and Excellence: And therefore, as it is neceſſarily ſuppoſed that his Dignity was antecedent to his Humility, it is likewiſe neceſſary to aſſert, that he was *in the Form of God*, before he was made *in the Likeneſs of Man*.

Thirdly, It is neceſſarily implied in the Argument, That he underwent whatever belonged to his State of Humiliation, before he enjoyed any thing that belonged to his State of Exaltation; becauſe his Exaltation was the Effect and Reward of his Humility; and being purchaſed and obtained by his Humility, it could not be antecedent to it: Conſequently it neceſſarily follows, That his natural State of Dignity, and his acquired State of Exaltation, are two perfectly different and diſtinct States; ſince one was evidently antecedent to, the other as evidently conſequent to his Humiliation: From whence it follows, That his being in the Form of God, being the Dignity which he was poſſeſſed of before his Humiliation, does not belong to him in virtue of any thing he did or ſuffered; nor is any Part of that Glory to which he was exalted, or

which he received after or upon account of his Sufferings.

This ought to be the more particularly inſiſted on, becauſe it is a common Miſtake to think, that becauſe Chriſt was exalted to Glory at his Reſurrection, and *for the Suffering of Death crowned with Glory and Honour*, as the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* ſpeaks, that therefore all Glory and Honour, and all Dignity and Excellence, which are ever aſcribed to him, belong to him only in conſequence of his Suffering and Obedience. From hence it is, that ſome Men think it a ſufficient Anſwer to all Arguments drawn from the Attributes of Power and Knowledge, and the like, to prove the Eternity and Divinity of the Logos, to ſay, that Chriſt received his Glory at his Reſurrection, and was made perfect through Sufferings; and therefore the Glory and Power which are any where aſcribed to him, are not his natural Perfections, but his acquired Honours, and of no antienter a Date than the Redemption: But this is not to anſwer the Arguments, but to confound the diſtinct States of Glory which belong to Chriſt; the Glory which he had with the Father before

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the Worlds, and the Glory which he received from the Father at the Redemption: One the Glory of Nature; the other the Glory of Office: One the Glory of the eternal Logos; the other the Glory of the Son of Man.

Thus, for Inſtance, we find the Glory which he had with the Father before the Worlds to be expreſly founded upon his creating the Worlds: *Who is the Image of the inviſible God, the Firſt-born of every Creature; for by him were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, viſible and inviſible; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers. All Things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all Things, and by him all Things conſiſt.* Coloſſ. i. 15, 16, 17. And in the very next Verſe the Apoſtle mentions an Honour belonging to his State of Exaltation, and founds it expreſsly upon his Reſurrection, as he has done what went before upon his Power of Creation: *And he is,* ſays he, *the Head of the Body, the Church; who is the Beginning, the Firſt-born from the Dead.* ver. 18. As Lord of all, he is ſtyled *the Firſt-born of every Creature;* as Head of

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the Church, *Firſt-born from the Dead.* Theſe then are different States, and founded in different Characters.

Thus in St. *John* we may often obſerve the ſame Difference. To raiſe the Dead is a Power equivalent to that of Creation; and therefore St. *John* tells us, *The Hour is coming, and now is, when the Dead ſhall hear the Voice of the Son of God.* John v. 25. In the very next Verſe but one, ſpeaking of his being Judge of the World, which belongs to him in virtue of the Redemption, and is one of the Glories of his Exaltation, he ſays, that *the Father hath given him Authority to execute Judgment alſo, becauſe he is the Son of Man.* Surely it is not for nothing that St. *John*, in the Compaſs of four or five Lines, ſpeaks of him under different Characters; and what can the Reaſon be, but that there are diſtinct Powers and Glories belonging to his diſtinct States? And therefore when the Evangeliſt mentions the Powers of one Kind, it was neceſſary to mention the proper Character from whence they flowed; when he mentioned the Powers of the other Kind, it was neceſſary to mention the other Character to which they belonged; and therefore it is that

that he ſays, the Dead ſhall be raiſed by the Voice of the *Son of God*, but they ſhall be judged by the Voice of the *Son of Man*.

The ſame likewiſe may be obſerved in the firſt Chapter of the *Hebrews*. In the ſecond and third Verſes the Apoſtle deſcribes the Dignity and Excellence of the Perſon whom God ſent to our Redemption: *He hath in theſe laſt Days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things; by whom alſo he made the Worlds; who being the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and upholding all Things by the Word of his Power:* Thus far he evidently deſcribes the Glory which Chriſt had with the Father before the Worlds; for this is the Character of the Perſon whom he ſent to redeem us. Then it follows, *When he had by himſelf purged our Sins, ſat down on the Right-Hand of the Majeſty on high, being made ſo much better than the Angels, as he hath by Inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they.* The Apoſtle, who had before ſpoken of the State of Dignity which he had before the Worlds, now ſpeaks of his State of Exaltation, which he received after his Sufferings: According to the Dig-

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nity of Nature, he was *the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and the Upholder of all Things by the Word of his Power:* But, according to the Honour of his Office, after he had *purged our Sins, he ſat down on the Right-Hand of the Majeſty on high, being made ſo much better than the Angels, as he hath by Inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they.*

In the ninth Verſe of the ſecond Chapter, the Apoſtle ſays, that Jeſus was *made a little lower* than the Angels; and yet here he ſays he *was made better* than the Angels: If he was made lower, in order to redeem us, it ſeems to imply he was really and by Nature higher; and if he was made higher, it ſeems to imply he was really and by Nature lower: But this Difficulty vaniſhes, by rightly diſtinguiſhing his three States, of Dignity, of Humiliation, and of Exaltation; which you ſee evidently mentioned in the *Philippians*, the Place now under Conſideration, and ſo often ſuppoſed and referred to in other Parts of Holy Writ. According to this Key, we may expound the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*, by the Apoſtle to the *Philippians*: For, when he, who was in the Form of God, made himſelf

himſelf of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of Man, he was then in theſe ſeveral Reſpects *made lower than the Angels:* But when, after his ſuffering Death upon the Croſs, he was exalted by God, and had a Name given him above every Name, then was he *made ſo much better than the Angels, as he had by Inheritance a more excellent Name than they*; a Name to which even they were to pay their Homage and Adoration.

In the Beginning of St. *John*'s Goſpel we find him thus deſcribed: *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The ſame was in the Beginning with God. All Things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* And in the eighth Chapter we find our Saviour giving this Teſtimony of himſelf: *Before Abraham was, I am.* Suppoſe he had ſaid, Before *Abraham* was, I was; thus much at leaſt would have been the Conſequence, That he had an Exiſtence before *Abraham*; and yet he was born into the World long after *Abraham:* Evidently then the Reſult would have been,

that

that he had long exiſted before his coming into the World: But now that he ſays, *Before Abraham was, I am*, ſomething more is implied; ſomething that peculiarly belongs to the Expreſſion, *I am*; and what that is, we may learn from the original Uſe of the Words. They are the Words which God made choice of to expreſs his own Eternity and Power, when *Moſes* inquired after the Name of God: He anſwered him, *I am that I am. Thus ſhalt thou ſay to the Children of Iſrael,* I AM *hath ſent me unto you.* Exod. iii. 14. What now could tempt our Saviour to uſe and apply this Expreſſion to himſelf? He knew it never had been applied to any but God, and would have been, in the Man ſo applying it, in the higheſt Degree, committing *the Robbery* of making himſelf *equal with God:* Beſides, they are a mere Soleciſm, and according to Analogy of Language expreſs nothing: No Idea belongs to them; for a Man cannot in his Mind carry the preſent Time back, and make it antecedent to the Time already paſt; and therefore to ſay, Before ſuch a Thing was, I am, is ſhuffling Ideas together, which can have no Place in the Mind or Underſtanding.

Underſtanding. If therefore you admit the Expreſſion to have any Meaning, you muſt allow the *I am* to belong to Chriſt, in its proper and peculiar Uſe, as ſignifying Eternity and Permanency of Duration. For the preſent then let this reſt; obſerving only, that here we find him aſſerting his own Eternity, and St. *John* aſcribing to him the Creation of all Things, which is the greateſt Act of Power we have any Notion of.

Let us now look to the other Part of the Queſtion. The laſt Time that our Saviour appeared to his Diſciples, to give them a full Commiſſion to teach and baptize, and full Aſſurance of his being with them to the End of the Word, he introduces his Charge to them, with Mention of his own Power and Authority: *All Power*, ſays he, *is given unto me in Heaven and Earth*, Matt. xxviii. 18; where it cannot be denied, but that he ſpeaks of Power and Authority conferred on him after his Reſurrection; and in virtue of this Power ſo received, he commiſſions them: They were made Delegates under him, with reſpect to the Power and Authority he had then received: All Power is given unto me in Heaven and Earth; *Go ye, therefore*, and teach all Nations. The Word

therefore

therefore imports, that he is giving out Commiſſions to them to act under the Power he had received: Their Commiſſion was to teach, to baptize; and he promiſes them (which Promiſe likewiſe is grounded upon the ſame Power) that he would be with them alway to the End of the World.

And having thus ſtated before you the Fact, let us conſider what Weight there is in the great *Socinian* Argument againſt the Eternity of the Logos. All Power, ſay they, was conferred on our Saviour after the Reſurrection; and therefore it is abſurd to aſcribe any Power to him before: For he that receives all Power is ſuppoſed to have none, before he ſo received it. At firſt View the Objection is plauſible; but, when duly conſidered, will be found to miſs the Aim: For the Power ſpoken of in St. *Matthew*, and the Power ſpoken of in St. *John*, belong to different and entirely diſtinct States; and therefore his receiving all Power belonging to one at this certain determinate Time, is no Proof of his not having the other before that Time. He that in virtue of a Royal Commiſſion receives all Power to govern any Part of the Kingdom, cannot be ſaid to have had no Power belonging to him

him before; for he had at leaſt the natural Powers of a Man: The Powers of Nature are diſtinct, and antecedent to the Powers of his Commiſſion. And you may pleaſe to obſerve, that the Acts of Power aſcribed to Chriſt, in his different States, are entirely different. St. *John*, when he ſpeaks of his eternal and inherent Power, aſcribes the Creation of all Things to him: And St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of the ſame Power, aſcribes to it the Preſervation of all Things. But in the *Hebrews* and in the *Coloſſians*, with reſpect to his Power of Office, he is ſtyled Head of the Church: And accordingly, our Saviour, when he ſays, All Power is given to him, and gives out Commiſſions under him to the Apoſtles, gives out none but ſuch as refer to the Church: All Power is given unto me; therefore I appoint you to teach and baptize. He does not, in virtue of this Power which he then received, give Commiſſions for the creating new Worlds, or for governing or preſerving the old; but, as by his Power received he then was conſtituted Head of the Church, he gives out Commiſſions only relating to the Church. As for his Power of creating, which is as evidently aſcribed to him as any one Thing,

that ſurely is diſtinct from the Power conferred on him at his Reſurrection: for it was ſomething too late to receive Power to create the World, after the World had for many Ages been created. I know what is ſaid of a new Creation by Virtue and Holineſs: But were Powers, and Principalities, and Dominions, were Things viſible and inviſible, nay, were the Foundations of the Earth and the Heavens, which the Apoſtle ſays are the Work of his Hands, thus newly created? Was the material World redeemed, and made holy and righteous? What Abſurdities may we not believe, or teach, if theſe are the Doctrines of clear and unbiaſſed Reaſon?

To conclude then, It is evident, that in the Place now before us, and in other Parts of Scripture, there are three diſtinct States ſpoken of, which belong to our bleſſed Lord: And this Obſervation is ſo material, that without having an Eye to it, there is no underſtanding the Scripture, or the early Writers of the Church, in the great and long controverted Points concerning the Eternity and Divinity of the Son of God. For, on one Side, it is very abſurd to urge the lofty Expreſſions in Scripture, or elſe-

where,

where, which belong to his laſt State, and deſcribe the Glories which he received in Reward of his Obedience, as Proofs of his natural Dignity, which he had before the Worlds began: And, on the other Side, it is equally abſurd to apply the Limitations in point of Time or Duration, or which in any other Reſpect belong to the Glories of his Office; to apply them, I ſay, to the antecedent and inherent Glories of his Nature.

DISCOURSE I.

PART II.

THE three diſtinct States belonging to Chriſt Jeſus, and mentioned in the Words of the Text, being ſuppoſed: The firſt, his State of Dignity, which he was in Poſſeſſion of before the Worlds began: The ſecond, his State of Humiliation, when he took upon himſelf the Form of a Servant, being made in the Likeneſs of Men, which ended in his Death upon the Croſs: The third, his State of Exaltation, to which he was raiſed by the Father, as the Reward of his Humility and Sufferings, and which ſhall continue till the Conſummation of all Things: Let us now proceed,

Thirdly, to compare the ſeveral Parts of St. *Paul*'s Argument together, and to examine, what the Apoſtle teaches us concerning each of theſe States.

' As to the two laſt of theſe States, that of Humiliation, and that of Exaltation, the Difficulties are not great. It will be readily allowed, that, in the firſt of the two, he was very Man, ſubject to the Infirmities of human Nature, and did really undergo the ſhameful and bitter Death of the Croſs: that, in the laſt, he is Lord and Head over the Church, under God; that he now governs and directs it, and ſhall, at the laſt Day, appear in the Majeſty of his Father, to judge the whole World. Thus far the Generality of Chriſtians are agreed, how widely ſoever they differ in their Opinions concerning his firſt State, and the proper Glories and Dignities belonging to him before his coming into the World.

This State is deſcribed in the firſt Verſe of the Text; *Who being in the Form of God.* In order to ſet forth the great Humility of Chriſt in becoming Man, the Apoſtle firſt tells us from how great and glorious a State he deſcended: *He was in the Form of God.* The following Words, as they ſtand in our Tranſlation,

Tranſlation, go on to deſcribe the Excellency of his Glory, which was ſo real and tranſcendent a Glory, *that he thought it no Robbery to be*, i. e. he thought himſelf entitled to be, *equal with God*. But I ſhall not inſiſt upon this Tranſlation; for it is more agreeable to the Apoſtle's Argument, and to the Language made uſe of, to ſuppoſe him to intend, in theſe Words, to expreſs the firſt Degree or Inſtance of his Humility; and that the Verſe ſhould be rendered by Words to this Effect: Who, being in the Form of God, was not fond, or tenacious of appearing as God; but made himſelf of no Reputation. I ſhall not trouble you with the particular Reaſons of this Rendering, which would lead us too far into critical Inquiries: But which Way ſoever of theſe two the Text be underſtood, the τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ will be found to belong to Jeſus Chriſt. If he thought it no Robbery to aſſume this Equality with God, (whatever is meant by it) undoubtedly he was equal: Or, if it was the Effect of his Humility, that he did not hold or inſiſt upon his Equality with God, then certainly he had ſuch an Equality; for where is the Humility of not in-

ſiſting on, or not retaining an Equality, which never did, or could belong to him?

I find ſome, in tranſlating theſe Words, make uſe of Expreſſions purpoſely choſen to exclude Chriſt from the Dignity here mentioned; for thus they make the Apoſtle ſpeak: Who, being in the Form of God, did not arrogate, aſſume, or lay claim to any Equality or Likeneſs with God: But I think this Language bears no Analogy to the Words in the Original, nor can be made to agree with the Aim and Deſign of the Apoſtle. The Expreſſion in the Original is metaphorical, and alludes to the Eagerneſs and Tenaciouſneſs with which Men catch, and retain the Prey, which they are afraid ſhould ſlip out of their Hands: But I believe no Language knows what it is to arrogate, aſſume, or lay claim to a Prey: A Prey is to be caught, to be held faſt; but not to be aſſumed, or arrogated, or laid claim to. Beſides, it is evidently St. *Paul*'s Deſign to ſet forth the great Humility of Chriſt Jeſus: In order to this; he ſays, he did not greedily retain his Equality with God; which, ſuppoſing the Equality to belong to him, is a very great, the greateſt

Inſtance

Inſtance of Humility: But for any Perſon who has no Right or Title to ſuch Equality, to arrogate or lay claim to it, is the utmoſt Pitch of Pride and Madneſs: And if you ſo expound theſe Words, you muſt affirm, that the Apoſtle, to prove the great Humility of Chriſt, endeavours to clear him of that, which imports the greateſt Pride and Inſolence imaginable. Whatever therefore is meant by the τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ, St. *Paul* evidently ſuppoſes in his Argument, that it did belong to Chriſt before his Humiliation, when he was in the Form of God.

Secondly, By comparing the ſeveral Parts of St. *Paul*'s Argument together, it will, I think, appear, that the μορφὴ Θεοῦ, and the τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ, here ſpoken of, are Expreſſions that relate to the ſame Thing; ſo that he who is poſſeſſed of the firſt, has a Right to the laſt. The Foundation of the Apoſtle's Argument is this; That Chriſt, enjoying a moſt exalted State of Glory, was not fond, or tenacious of that Glory; but made himſelf of no Reputation: For this Argument being wholly ſpent in ſetting forth the Humility of Chriſt, there is no Occaſion of mentioning any other Glory, than that which, out of his great Humility, he laid aſide.

aſide. The Glory therefore which the Apoſtle here ſays Chriſt had, and the Glory which he here ſays he laid aſide, are one and the ſame Glory, the Glory which belongs to the Form of God.

But further: Let us read this and the next Verſe together: Who, being in the Form of God, did not eagerly inſiſt to be equal with God, but made himſelf of no Reputation; or, as the Original ſignifies, he emptied himſelf, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of Men. The Humility of Chriſt conſiſted in changing willingly a glorious for an inglorious Condition: The glorious Condition which he was poſſeſſed of, was the Form of God; the inglorious Condition to which he ſubmitted, was the Form of a Servant. When the Apoſtle therefore ſays, *Who, being in the Form of God, took upon him the Form of a Servant*, he plainly intimates to us, that he obſcured, or laid aſide the Glory belonging to the Form of God, when he took the Form of a Servant: The *Form of God* therefore expreſſes and contains all thoſe Glories, which Chriſt willingly ſuffered to be hid in his State of Humility. The very ſame Thing is expreſſed

by

by the *Equality with God* here mentioned; for it is ſaid, that he did not eagerly inſiſt to be equal with God: Now certainly that which he did not inſiſt to keep, and that which he emptied himſelf of, is one and the ſame Thing. If therefore the Glories which he laid aſide were *the Form of God*, and if the Glories which he did not inſiſt to keep were *this Equality with God*, you muſt neceſſarily ſay that the Form of God, and the Equality with God, are one and the ſame Thing. What has hitherto been ſaid, does not ſufficiently diſcover what the preciſe Notion belonging to each of theſe Expreſſions is; but it ſhews evidently, I think, that the Equality with God, whatever it means, did as properly and really belong to our bleſſed Lord, before his coming into the World, as the Form of God did; which, as far as I remember, all allow to be the proper Character of Chriſt in this Place, however they limit and reſtrain it in their various Expoſitions.

Beſides, the Form of the Argument affords us ſtill a further Evidence, that St. *Paul* eſteemed theſe Characters to be proper and peculiar to Chriſt, to be his natural and inherent, not his borrowed Glories: For,

conſider what it is that St. *Paul* exhorts the *Philippians* to; *Look not*, ſays he, *every Man on his own Things, but every Man alſo on the Things of others:* that is, do not act merely upon the View of your own proper Good and Advantage only, but take into your Conſideration likewiſe the Good and Advantage of your Fellow-Creatures: He exhorts them that they ſhould not τὰ ἑαυτῶν σκοπεῖν, look to their own Things; but, ſays he, *Let this Mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* Then he ſets forth, as the Argument requires he ſhould, how little Chriſt regarded τὰ ἑαυτῷ, Things belonging to himſelf; for, being in the Form of God, he was not eager of appearing equal with God. This Form of God therefore, and this Equality with God, were certainly thoſe Things of his own, which the Apoſtle intended to ſhew that he did not look to: And without taking this to be his Meaning, the Precept and the Example cannot meet in the ſame Point.

Suppoſe then here, that the Form of God means the Glories proper and peculiar to the Preſence of God; and that to be equal with God, in this Place, ſignifies only to be cloathed with equal Glories, to appear in

his Majeſty and Power; yet it deſerves to be conſidered, who, and what Manner of Perſon he is, to whom the proper and peculiar Glories of God, to whom his Majeſty and his Power do belong, and ſo belong to him, as to be his own. Should God communicate his Glories to a Creature, in the higheſt Degree that a Creature is capable of receiving them; yet the Glories of God, ſo communicated to the Creature, could in no Senſe be ſaid to be the Creature's own Glories. Our own Glories are thoſe only which are proper and peculiar to our own Nature; for, as the Apoſtle elſewhere ſays, *one Thing differeth from another Thing in Glory.*

But the Apoſtle's Mind will ſtill further appear as we go on: *He took upon him*, ſays he, *the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of Man: And being found in Faſhion as a Man, he humbled himſelf.* The Form of a Servant is here plainly oppoſed to the Form of God: When he laid aſide the Form of God, he took the Form of a Servant: If we can therefore come at the determinate Meaning of either of theſe Expreſſions, it will certainly lead to the Knowledge of the other. The true Key to this Place is, I think, to be found in the firſt

and

and ſecond Chapters of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews:* Give me leave therefore for a while to leave the Apoſtle to the *Philippians*, and to conſider what the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* teaches us.

God, ſays he, *who at ſundry Times, and in divers Manners, ſpake in Times paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt Days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things; by whom alſo he made the Worlds: Who being the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and upholding all Things by the Word of his Power*, &c. Which amounts to no more than what the Apoſtle to the *Philippians* has ſaid of him, in fewer Words; *Who being in the Form of God.* But the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* proceeds, and ſhews us wherein the true Difference between Chriſt and all other Beings lies; and places it in this determinately, That Chriſt was the Son of God, and all other Beings, even the mightieſt Angels, the Servants of God: *For unto which of the Angels ſaid he, at any Time, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee?* And again, *I will be to him a Father, and he ſhall be to me a Son:* And again, *When he bringeth in the Firſt-begotten into the World,*

he

he ſaith, And let all the Angels of God worſhip him. Thus you ſee Chriſt is declared to be the Son of God, and the Object of the Angels' Worſhip. But of the Angels the Apoſtle adds, *Who maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Miniſters a Flame of Fire*: And, in the laſt Verſe of the Chapter, ſpeaking ſtill of Angels, he ſays, *Are they not all miniſtering Spirits?*

The Image which the Writer to the *Hebrews* ſeems to have before him, is that of a great Houſehold: He conſiders God as the *Pater-familias*, the Father of Chriſt, and the Lord and Maker of the Univerſe: Chriſt is conſidered as the *Filius-familias*, the Son, the Heir of all Things, as he ſtyles him: Other Beings are the Servants and Attendants, of different Orders, belonging to the Family. And under this View it is not hard to know what the Apoſtle to the *Philippians* means, when he ſays Chriſt took upon him *the Form of a Servant:* He was truly the Son of the Family, the Heir of all Things, and had the Form and Majeſty of his Father; but he deſcended from the Glories of his Father, and became like one of the Family, ſubmitting to take the Form and Character of a Servant on him. The Apoſtle

Apoſtle to the *Philippians* adds, *being made in the Likeneſs of Men:* The Reaſon and Meaning of this Addition the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* will likewiſe teach us, c. ii. v. 16. *Verily, he took not on him the Nature of Angels, but he took on him the Seed of Abraham.* Angels are Servants as well as Men: Therefore, by ſaying Chriſt took on him *the Form of a Servant*, there was Room left to ſuppoſe him to have taken the Nature of Angels: To ſhew therefore what Nature he took, the Apoſtle adds, he took the Form of a Servant *in the Likeneſs of Men*; that is, in the Nature of Man. So then the μορφὴ δούλου, the Form of a Servant, is the common Mark and Character of all the Creatures of God; the ὁμοίωμα, the Likeneſs here ſpoken of, is the peculiar and proper Character of each Species: So that the μορφὴ δούλου and the ὁμοίωμα ἀνθρώπου make a compleat and perfect Man: He was not only a Man in Appearance and in Likeneſs, but in Reality, having the ſame common Nature, diſtinguiſhed by the ſame ſpecific Differences.

The Apoſtle to the *Philippians* adds, *And being found in Faſhion as a Man, he humbled himſelf.* It requires ſome Attention to the Apoſtle's

Apoſtle's Argument, to diſtinguiſh rightly between the Form, the Likeneſs, and the Faſhion, which are all in this Place applied to Chriſt Jeſus. In the firſt Verſe of the Text, the Apoſtle ſays, Who being in the Form of God, did not eagerly retain his Equality with God, but emptied *himſelf*: By this Equality which Chriſt did not retain, but emptied himſelf of, I think it is impoſſible to underſtand any thing elſe, but the divine Glories in which he appeared, and which, during the State of his Humiliation, he laid aſide: His Nature he could not lay aſide; he continued to be the Son of God, though he appeared not like the Son of God; and therefore, the Apoſtle adds, being Man, he was found in Faſhion as a Man, appearing in no greater Majeſty or Glory, than what truly belonged to him as Man. The Faſhion of a Man, in this Part of the Text, I take to anſwer to the being equal with God, in the firſt Part; that Equality which he laid aſide, being nothing elſe but the σχῆμα Θεοῦ, the Faſhion, or truly divine and majeſtic Appearance of God. The Form of God, in the firſt Part, anſwers both to the Form of a Servant, and the Likeneſs of Men, in the ſecond Part:

The Form of a Servant being common to all the different Orders of Creatures, it did not of itſelf ſufficiently expreſs what Nature Chriſt took upon him; and therefore the Addition, in the Likeneſs of Men, was but neceſſary: But there are no different Orders of Beings, to whom the Form of God belongs: And therefore, the Apoſtle having told us that Chriſt was in the Form of God, there wanted no Addition to inform us what kind or manner of Being he was; for God has not communicated his Form or proper Glory to any of his Creatures: The Form of God belongs to God only.

And thus the Argument for our bleſſed Saviour's Divinity from this Text ſtands. He had, before he came into the World, the true and proper Glories of Divinity, and, under the Old Teſtament, appeared in the real Majeſty of his Father. Whether the proper and peculiar Glories of the Divinity, and the real Majeſty of God, are communicable to a Creature, judge ye. Beſides, if the Apoſtle, by ſaying Chriſt took the Form of a Servant, and the Likeneſs of Men, means that he became indeed a very Creature, and Man, conſider what he means by the ſame Expreſſion in the other Part, where

where he affirms, that Chriſt was in the Form of God; and whether he can mean leſs than that he was God, above all Creatures, as the Son of the Family is ſuperior to the Servants, and ſubject to the Father, as a Son, receiving from him whatever he has of Power, Glory, and Majeſty.

For the further Confirmation of the Expoſition of the Text here given, let us conſider in what Manner St. *Paul* uſually applies the Example of Chriſt, by ſetting it in Oppoſition to the corrupt Inclinations and Paſſions derived from *Adam*. Thus, in the fourth of the *Epheſians*, he calls upon them *to put off concerning the former Converſation the Old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Luſts, and be renewed in the Spirit of their Mind; and that they put on the New Man, which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs:* And in the firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, Chapter the fifteenth, he ſays, *The firſt Man is of the Earth, earthy; the ſecond Man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the Earthy, ſuch are they alſo that are earthy; and as is the Heavenly, ſuch are they alſo that are heavenly.* There are many other Places of the like Import, which occur ſo frequently, that

there is no Occaſion particularly to point them out.

In this Paſſage to the *Philippians* the Apoſtle does not expreſly draw the Compariſon between the firſt and ſecond *Adam*: But the Account he gives of the Conduct and Spirit of the ſecond *Adam*, is ſo ſtrong a Contraſt to the corrupt Affections of the firſt, that there can be but little Doubt of his Meaning.

Look into the Hiſtory of *Moſes*: There you will find that *Adam* was created *after the Image of God*, and had Dominion given him over the Creatures of the Earth; by which he became Lord of this lower World. St. *Paul*, in the Words of the Text, tells us, that Chriſt was *in the Form of God*; which gave him a Dominion over the Works of Nature, which had their Being and owed their Preſervation to his Power. *Moſes* gives an Account, how *Adam*, through Diſobedience and a vain Ambition, fell from the Dignity in which he was created, and entailed Miſery upon his Deſcendents. St. *Paul* ſays, that Chriſt, through Obedience and Submiſſion to the Will of the Father, has ſet us an Example, by which, if the ſame Mind be in us, we may

may recover what is loſt. *Moſes* tells us, that *Adam* was tempted to eat the forbidden Fruit, upon the Hopes the Tempter gave him, that it would make him *like to God*, and increaſe him in Knowledge, *to know Good and Evil:* He thought it ſuch an advantageous Propoſal, that he catched at the Opportunity, and eagerly embraced the Offer. St. *Paul*'s Account is, that Chriſt, who had a Right by Nature to appear in the Majeſty and Glory of God, yet voluntarily laid it aſide, and lived and died in the World, *in Faſhion as a Man.* What *Adam* got by this bold Attempt, we all know: He run, like an eager and hungry Fiſh, to ſeize the Bait, but was miſerably deceived; he loſt the Prey, and ſwallowed only the Hook: But Chriſt, for a Recompence of his Obedience, was highly exalted, and had a Name given him, which is above every Name.

If we admit of this Reference to the Caſe of the firſt *Adam*, it will determine the Senſe of thoſe Words, which in our Tranſlation are rendered, *He thought it no Robbery to be equal with God:* For, in that Caſe, the Oppoſition between the two Characters would

require, that it ſhould be ſaid of *Adam*, that he thought it a Robbery to be equal with God; which is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Account of *Moſes*, and to the View and Reaſoning of St. *Paul*.

DISCOURSE I.

PART III.

AND *being found in Faſhion as a Man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs.* He was in the Form of God; but he was not fond of retaining, or making ſhew of the Glories belonging to the divine Form, but took upon him the Form of a Servant, being made in the Likeneſs of Men. This was great Humility: But this was not all; for, being Man, he ſtill deſcended lower; quitted the Dignities and Honours, which even as Man he might have retained; ſubmitted to the meaneſt Condition of the Sons of Men, a Condition expoſed to Scorn and

Contempt and ill Uſage; and at laſt became obedient unto Death, and that not the common Death of Mankind, but of the vileſt of Slaves, even the Death of the Croſs. The Humility then of Chriſt is here plainly repreſented to us under two Views: In one View the Apoſtle conſiders Chriſt, who was in the Form of God, deſcending ſo low as to become Man: In the other, he conſiders Chriſt in the Faſhion of a Man, deſcending yet lower, and taking upon himſelf the meaneſt Condition, and undergoing the moſt ignominious Death, that either the moſt miſerable or the moſt wicked of Mankind had ever experienced.

I have endeavoured to explain all that belongs to the firſt Inſtance of Humility, by conſidering what the State was from which Chriſt deſcended, and what the State and Condition to which he deſcended. I ſhall now conſider this ſecond Inſtance of the Humility of Chriſt Jeſus in the ſame Method, and lay before you, as far as I can diſcern the Apoſtle's Meaning, the true Senſe and Import of the Words of the Text. In the firſt Inſtance we learnt what St. *Paul*'s Opinion was concerning our Saviour before his Incarnation; in this we

ſhall

ſhall find what Notion he had of him during his Abode on Earth.

The Queſtion you ſee is this: What Notion had St. *Paul* concerning Chriſt, or what Manner of Perſon did he conceive him to be, when he thus deſcribed him, *He being found in Faſhion as a Man?*

This will appear, by conſidering, what is meant by the *Faſhion of a Man*, and what could lead St. *Paul* to the Choice of that Expreſſion; and likewiſe, by examining the Inſtances of Humility given in the Text, *the becoming obedient to Death, even the Death of the Croſs*; and conſidering, of what Sort of Perſon it can properly be ſaid, That he was humble in ſubmitting to Death.

The *Faſhion of a Man* denotes thoſe proper and diſtinguiſhing Characters which belong to a Man as ſuch, by which he is known to be what he is; that is, by which he is known to be a Man, and not any other Kind of Being: For whoever appears with any Marks or Characters which ſhew him not to be a Man, or to be more than a Man, cannot be ſaid to appear in the Faſhion of a Man. Whoever will be at the Pains to conſider St. *Paul*'s Uſe of the original Word, and of the Verb derived from it, will find this

this Account to be true: Thus, for Inſtance, he tells us of Satan's *transforming* himſelf into an Angel of Light, and of his Miniſters *transforming* themſelves into the Apoſtles of Chriſt; in both Places uſing the Verb derived from the original Word in this Place; and in both Places his Meaning is, not that Satan became an Angel of Light, or his Miniſters Apoſtles of Chriſt, but that Satan appeared in the Faſhion of an Angel of Light, ſo as not to be known from an Angel of Light, and his Miniſters in the Faſhion of Apoſtles of Chriſt, ſo as not to be diſtinguiſhed from them. By the *Faſhion of a Man* then we can underſtand only the true and real Appearances of a Man.

Let us proceed then to conſider, what led St. *Paul* to this Expreſſion, and why he might not as well ſay, and, *being Man*, he humbled himſelf, as, being *found in Faſhion as a Man*, he humbled himſelf: For this we muſt look back to the firſt Riſe of the Apoſtle's Argument. The Perſon here ſpoken of, Jeſus Chriſt, was in the Form of God, but *emptied himſelf:* Emptied himſelf of what? Not of his Being or Nature, but of the Glories and Majeſty belonging to him: Being in the Form of God, he laid aſide

aſide the Glories proper to the Form of God, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, in the Likeneſs of Men. Whatever he was as to Nature and Eſſence, when he was in the Form of God, that he continued to be ſtill, when he became Man: But the σχῆμα Θεῦ, the Glories of the Form of God, he laid down; and though he continued to be the ſame, yet, as to the σχῆμα, as to outward Dignity and Appearance, he was mere Man, being found, as the Apoſtle ſays, *in Faſhion* as a Man. Had the Apoſtle conceived him, whilſt here on Earth, to have been mere Man only, in what tolerable Senſe could he ſay of him, *being found in Faſhion as a Man?* for in what Faſhion ſhould a Man be found, but in the Faſhion of a Man? What Need was there of this Limitation, that he was found a Man as to his Faſhion, unleſs in Reality he was ſomething more than Man? But if you conſider the Man Jeſus Chriſt to be the ſame Perſon who was in the Form of God, and who, according to that Dignity of Nature, had a Right to appear in the Majeſty and Glory of God, it is proper to aſk, How did he appear on Earth? And the Apoſtle's Words are a proper Anſwer to the Queſtion, *He was found in Faſhion as a Man.*

The Apoſtle perhaps had another View in the Choice of this Expreſſion, *And being found in Faſhion as a Man*; with reſpect to what follows, *he became obedient unto Death:* For it might well ſeem ſtrange, that any ſhould attempt the Life of him, who was himſelf the Lord of Life. He became obedient unto Death; but how came he to be called to this Obedience? Who was the bold Man that laid Hands upon this God on Earth, and was vain enough to think of compaſſing his Death? To which the Apoſtle gives this previous Anſwer: He was found in Faſhion as a Man; as ſuch, his Life was attempted, and he became obedient unto Death. This I take to be the Import of the Word *found*; he was *found* in Faſhion as a Man, and became obedient unto Death: By whom was he found? By thoſe who ſought his Life, and called him to the Obedience, which he readily paid. If you allow the Apoſtle to have had this View, you muſt needs ſuppoſe that he thought him more than mortal Man, when he is at ſome Pains to aſſign a Reaſon that could tempt any one to think him liable to Death. Had he been mere Man, there would have wanted none of this Caution and Circumſpection: The

greateſt

greateſt are liable to Death, and liable to fall by the Attempts of the loweſt, who, if they are wicked enough, and deſperate enough, have Ground ſufficient to hope for Succeſs, from the common Mortality, from which the greateſt of the Sons of Men are not exempt.

Secondly, Let us examine the Inſtances of Humility given in the Text, and conſider to what Sort of Perſon they can be applied as ſuch: *He became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs.* Death is the common End of all Mankind; and, if to die be Humility, in this Reſpect all are equally humble. How comes Jeſus Chriſt then to be diſtinguiſhed by this Inſtance of Humility? How comes that to be Humility in him, which in every body elſe is Neceſſity? If you ſpeak of mere Man, you may as properly ſay, that he is humble in having two Legs or two Arms, as in ſubmitting to Death, ſince both are equally the Courſe and Work of Nature: And yet you plainly ſee, that the Apoſtle reckons it great Humility in Chriſt, that he ſubmitted to Death. What Manner of Perſon then was Chriſt Jeſus, over whom Death had no Power, but through his own Conſent and Submiſſion?

Mortal

Mortal he was, or elſe he could not have died; more than Mortal he was, or elſe he could not have avoided Death; in which caſe, to die had been no Humility. You muſt allow then, that St. *Paul*, in arguing as he does concerning Jeſus Chriſt, neceſſarily ſuppoſes him to be more than mere Man; to be that Perſon, who was found in Faſhion as a Man, becauſe he willingly quitted the divine Glories belonging to him; who died, becauſe he willingly laid down his Life, which no Man could take from him.

Let me obſerve further, with what Accuracy St. *Paul* ſpeaks upon this Subject: In the firſt Inſtance of his Humility, when he quitted the Glories proper to the Form of God, the Apoſtle ſays, *he emptied himſelf*, ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτὸν; for the Form of a Servant, and the Likeneſs of Men, which he took upon him, were inconſiſtent with divine Glories; they could make no Part of them: Had he retained the Glories of God, he could not have come in the Form of a Servant, or the Likeneſs of Men; and therefore he emptied himſelf of thoſe Glories. In the ſecond Inſtance, the Apoſtle conſiders Chriſt Jeſus as found in Faſhion as a Man,

and

and humbly ſubmitting to Death, even the Death of the Croſs: Now to die, to die even upon a Croſs, has nothing in it incompatible with the Faſhion of a Man; all who die, all who are executed, die in Faſhion as Men: and therefore the Apoſtle does not ſay here that he emptied himſelf, for he retained the Faſhion of a Man; but he ſays *he humbled himſelf:* The Humility therefore here ſpoken of, bears no Relation to the Faſhion of a Man here ſpoken of; for the Faſhion of a Man ſuffered no Diminution, it continued one and the ſame; he was as much in the Faſhion of a Man upon the Croſs, as he was before: The Humility therefore relates to the Perſon, and his real Dignity, in diſtinction to the Appearance and Faſhion in which he was found. With reſpect to the Perſon of Chriſt Jeſus, who was in the Form of God, to die was great Humility: With reſpect to the Faſhion in which he was found, it was no Humility; for he was found in Faſhion as a Man, and he died but as the Sons of Men often die.

But further: The Apoſtle had before told us, That Chriſt *took upon him the Form of a Servant, being made in the Likeneſs of Men:* This indeed was great Humility; for him, who

who was in the Form of God, and had a Right to appear in the Glories and Majeſty of God; for him, I ſay, to deſcend to a ſervile Condition, to become mere Man, was great Humility: But, being Man, to die ſeems but a natural Conſequence; for Death is the common, the natural End of all Men: How comes the Apoſtle then, after he had told us that Chriſt Jeſus became Man, to give us this as a diſtinct and further Inſtance of his Humility, that he *became obedient unto Death?* This ſeems to be only the neceſſary Conſequence of his being Man. Had he, when he became Man, ceaſed to be what he was before; Death had been but the natural and neceſſary Conſequence of the Change: But, though he was Man, yet, being Lord of all Things, it was always in his Power, as he himſelf has told us, to take up his Life and to lay it down; for, as St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, expreſſes it, ſpeaking of thoſe who put Chriſt to Death, *they killed the Lord of Life*, or the Prince of Life; which Expreſſion occurs likewiſe in St. *Peter*'s Sermon: Being then, even whilſt on Earth, and cloathed with human Fleſh and Blood, the very Lord of Life, and upholding all Things by the Word

of his Power, he was ſuperior to the Neceſſity of human Nature, and ſubject to Death only becauſe he choſe to die. To die therefore was great Humility: To die upon the Croſs ſtill greater; ſubmitting to the Malice of thoſe Wretches, who, whilſt they were deſtroying him, lived only by his Power, who was the Prince of Life. It was Humility therefore to become Man: After he was Man, it was Humility to die; ſince the Powers of Life were in his own Hand, and he could both lay down his Life, and take it up. If you conſider what St. *Paul* ſays in this View, his Diſcourſe is juſt, the Example full; but without this Support, you will hardly find either his Argument, or the Humility of Chriſt Jeſus.

DISCOURSE I.

PART IV.

WHEREFORE God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name, which is above every Name: That at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth; and that every Tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father. In theſe Words the Apoſtle ſets before us the exceeding great Glory to which God the Father exalted Chriſt, as the End and Reward of his great Humility and Sufferings: Words which very well deſerve our ſerious Attention and Conſideration, as inſtructing

us in the true Reaſon, and diſcovering to us the true Foundation of the Honour and Worſhip and Glory, which the Chriſtian Church has ever, and ſtill continues to give and pay to our bleſſed Lord.

There is indeed a Difficulty in conceiving how any Acceſſion of Glory or Honour ſhould be made to him, who was, before his coming into the World, *in the Form of God*, and, as ſuch, was in Poſſeſſion of the Majeſty and Glory belonging to the Form of God; and yet the Apoſtle's Argument ſeems to ſuppoſe an Acceſſion of Honour to be made to him upon his Exaltation, as the Reward of his Humility and Obedience. For thus the Argument ſtands: Jeſus Chriſt, who was in the Form of God, and in Poſſeſſion of divine Glory, laid aſide the divine Glory, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, being made in the Likeneſs of Men; and, appearing as mere Man, he ſubmitted to Death, even the Death of the Croſs: Wherefore God, as a Reward to his Humility, has *more* highly exalted him, (for ſo the original Word ſignifies,) and given him a Name above every Name. This Glory therefore, according to the Strain of the Apoſtle's Reaſoning, ought to be a more excellent Glory than the firſt Glory; for, if

God

God gave him nothing but what he had a Right to, according to the very Excellency and Dignity of his Nature, how did he reward his Humility? To exalt a Man for his Humility, is to raiſe him to a Station above what he had before his Humility: According to Parity of Reaſon, therefore, the Glory to which Chriſt was exalted, as a Reward to his Humility, ought to be a greater Glory, than that which he had before his Humility.

But how can theſe Things be? you will ſay: How can he, who is *the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, the expreſs Image of his Perſon*, how can he be exalted in Glory? or, what greater Glory can we conceive than *the Glory of the Only-begotten of the Father?* eſpecially conſidering that Chriſt himſelf, in praying for Glory for himſelf, prays for no other Glory, than that which he had before the World was: *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own ſelf, with the Glory which I had with thee before the World was.* John xvii. 5.

To ſet this Matter in a true Light, you muſt conſider, That the Glories of Nature and the Glories of Office are very different and diſtinct Glories; that the Apoſtle, in

the Place before us, ſays nothing of Nature or Eſſence; he ſpeaks of the Perſon Jeſus Chriſt, and conſiders him as the ſame Perſon, in all his different States, of Glory, Humility, and Exaltation: The ſame Nature which he had being in the Form of God, the ſame he had in his State of Humiliation, and now has in his State of Exaltation: So that the Apoſtle does not conſider him, in his Exaltation, as having an higher Nature, or greater natural Powers and Dignities, than he had before his Exaltation; and it would indeed be very abſurd to ſuppoſe he did; for the Exaltation of any Perſon does not conſiſt in a Change of Nature, or natural Powers, but in acquired Honours and Authority. When a Man is raiſed to be a King, he is ſtill a Man, has ſtill the natural Powers of a Man, without Increaſe or Diminution, though he receives new Honour and new Authority.

The Apoſtle's Argument then does not infer that the natural Powers and Dignities of Chriſt Jeſus were increaſed, or that they were capable of being increaſed; but only, that, in conſequence of the Redemption, God put all Things immediately under him, making him Head over all, and conſequently

quently entitled him to that Worſhip, and thoſe Honours, which were not before paid to him. Chriſt Jeſus was indeed ſubſervient to his Father in the Creation of the Worlds: *By him all Things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made,* John i. 3. And yet the Worſhip and Honour which flow from the Relation of the Creature to the Creator, always were paid, and ſtill are paid to the Father; for the Evidence ariſing from the Works of Nature lead to the Acknowledgment of one, and but of one great Being; and therefore there could be no Pretence of ſetting up another, either in Oppoſition or Conjunction with him, to be an Object of Worſhip: But when Chriſt undertook and completed the Redemption of the World, then it was thought proper to make known the Glory which he had before the Worlds began; that we might know that we were to expect Salvation from a Hand that was able to ſave, and that the Honour and Duty owing to him who made us, and to him who redeemed us, might be conſiſtent: For when Chriſt purchaſed Mankind at the Price of his own Blood, they became his by the ſtricteſt Bonds of Juſtice and Gratitude;

there aroſe a new Relation between the Redeemer and the redeemed, and the Duty and Worſhip and Honour, which flow from that Relation, are immediately owing to Chriſt Jeſus.

Thus Chriſt, having perfected the Redemption of the World, was by the Father made Lord of all Things: All Things were put in Subjection under him, and the Head of every Man is Chriſt: We are no longer our own, but Chriſt's, being bought with a Price, even with the precious Blood of the Son of God. This is the Scripture Account of the Matter, almoſt in Scripture Words: And you ſee here is no Room to ſpeculate about Nature or Eſſence, or to ſuppoſe that Chriſt, before his Exaltation, was leſs honourable, as to his Nature and Eſſence; any more than there is Room to ſuppoſe that God was leſs honourable, as to his Nature, before the Creation, becauſe at the Creation the Sons of God ſung together for Joy, and paid new Honours and Adorations to the great Creator.

Having, I hope, removed this Difficulty, I ſhall proceed to conſider the Doctrine of the Text, in the following Method:

Firſt, That the Power and Authority exerciſed by Chriſt Jeſus, in and over the

Church of God, are derived from this Exaltation: And conſequently,

Secondly, That the Honour and Worſhip paid to Chriſt, in and by the Church of God, are founded in this Exaltation.

Thirdly, That the Power and Authority exerciſed by Chriſt, and the Honour and Worſhip paid to Chriſt, are, and ought to be, ultimately refered to the Glory of God the Father.

Theſe Propoſitions are ſo evidently contained in the Words of the Text, as to be ſubject to no Doubt in the Explication: But it may be of Service to ſhew that the Doctrine is agreeable to, and is confirmed by the whole Tenor of Scripture.

Firſt, I am to ſhew you, That all Power and Authority, exerciſed by Chriſt Jeſus, in and over the Church of God, are derived from this Exaltation.

And the firſt Authority which I ſhall produce, in confirmation of this Propoſition, is a very great one, even that of our bleſſed Lord himſelf; who, after his Reſurrection, and not long before his Aſcenſion, appeared to his Diſciples, and gave them a ſolemn Commiſſion to teach and baptize in his Name: But, before he gave them Commiſſions,

miſſions, he did, as it were, open his own, which was the Foundation of theirs: *All Power*, ſays he, *is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth: Go ye, therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghoſt, teaching them to obſerve all Things whatſoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World.* Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. In this Place you hear our Saviour declaring all Power and Authority to be given him at his Reſurrection; in conſequence of which Power he commiſſions his Diſciples to convert, baptize, and inſtruct the World. There is no Doubt but this Power is Part of the Exaltation which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of in the Text, to which God raiſed Chriſt for his Sufferings: You ſee likewiſe, that the Powers delegated to the Miniſters of the Church derive themſelves from this Power ſo received; and, conſequently, all Acts done by them in the Name of Chriſt, are founded in the Power which he received at his Reſurrection.

St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, c. i. v. 4. expreſly tells us, that *Chriſt was declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holineſs, by the Reſurrection from the*

the Dead. God had before, at his Baptiſm, and at his Transfiguration on the Mount, declared him to be his *well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleaſed*; but at his Reſurrection he was declared not only to be his Son, but to be his Son *with Power.* If you look forward to the fourteenth Chapter of this Epiſtle, you will find the Apoſtle's Senſe of this Matter very fully and clearly expreſſed; *For to this End Chriſt both died, and roſe, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the Dead and Living:* So that the Power over all Things, the Dominion both of the Dead and the Living, commenced at the Reſurrection, which was indeed the very firſt Step to Glory and Honour, which our bleſſed Saviour took after his State of Humiliation and Sufferings: For though according to our Conceptions his Pains and Sufferings ended on the Croſs, yet in the Grave there is neither Honour nor Glory: In his Reſurrection he firſt and truly appeared to be himſelf, to be the Lord of Life and Glory.

In his Epiſtle to the *Coloſſians*, towards the middle of the firſt Chapter, St. *Paul* ſpeaks largely of the Perſon of Jeſus Chriſt: He repreſents to them his great Dignity and Glory,

Glory, by ſetting before them the Part which he bore in the Creation of all Things, and likewiſe the Authority and Power to which his Father raiſed him, and which he now exerciſes as Head of the Body, the Church. And this Place is the better worth your Attention, becauſe the Apoſtle does not only diſtinguiſh between the Power by which Chriſt created all Things, and the Power by which he governs all Things as Head of the Body, the Church; but he has likewiſe diſtinguiſhed and marked out to us the different Sources and Originals, from whence theſe two Powers flow. In the 15th Verſe he thus ſpeaks of JeſusChriſt: *Who is the Image of the inviſible God, the Firſt-born of every Creature: All Things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all Things, and by him all Things conſiſt.* With reſpect to this great Work of the Creation, you ſee, St. *Paul* conſiders him as being before all Things, as being the Image of the inviſible God, the Firſt-born of every Creature: Immediately the Apoſtle adds, *And he is Head of the Body, the Church; who is the Beginning, the Firſt-born from the Dead.* This ſurely is a very different Beginning from that which he mentioned before; and yet this

this Beginning, which is his Reſurrection, is plainly laid down as the Foundation of the Principality and Headſhip which he holds over the Church: He was the Beginning, the ἀρχὴ, with reſpect to the Creation of all Things, being the Firſt-born of every Creature: He is the Beginning, and Head of the Church, being the Firſt-born from the Dead.

I ſhall mention but one Place more to you, and that ſo plain an one, that I ſhall not need to ſpend much of your Time in it: It is in the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, and the firſt Chapter, where St. *Paul* tells them, that his Prayer for them was, *that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him: The Eyes of your Underſtanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints, and what is the exceeding Greatneſs of his Power to us-ward who believe, according to the Working of his mighty Power; which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the Dead, and ſet him at his own right Hand in the heavenly Places, far above all Principality and Power*

and

and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but alſo in that which is to come; and hath put all Things under his Feet, and gave him to be the Head over all Things to the Church, which is his Body, the Fulneſs of him, who filleth all in all. What can be added to this Deſcription of Power and Authority? And yet the Apoſtle, you ſee, founds all this upon his Reſurrection, and his Exaltation conſequent to it: Then were all Things put under his Feet; then was he given to be Head over the Church, and ſet above all Principality and Power and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named. The Scripture abounds in Evidence of this Kind: And I think there is nothing plainer in the Goſpel, than that Chriſt Jeſus is our Lord, becauſe he hath redeemed us; that he is our King, being raiſed by the Father to all Power and Authority; that he is our Mediator and Interceſſor, being ſet down on the right Hand of God in the heavenly Places. But,

Secondly, All Honour and Worſhip paid to Chriſt, in and by the Church of God, are founded in this Exaltation.

This is a natural Conſequence of what has been already ſaid. The Title which Chriſt

Jeſus

Jeſus has to receive Honour and Worſhip and Adoration in the Church, is the Reaſon and Foundation upon which Honour and Worſhip and Adoration are paid him in the Church. What his Title is, you have already heard; and, conſequently, the Foundation of the Church's Worſhip has been already manifeſted: But, that your Faith may not ſtand in the Words of Man's Wiſdom, I will lay before you the Evidence of Scripture in this Point alſo.

In the Revelation of St. *John* we have ſeveral Hymns recorded, which the Church of the Firſt-born ſing to God and to his Chriſt; and we cannot form our Devotions from a better Copy than that which they have ſet us. In the fourth Chapter, the four and twenty Elders fall down before him that ſat on the Throne, and worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever, and caſt their Crowns before the Throne, ſaying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour and Power; for thou haſt created all Things, and for thy Pleaſure they are and were created.* Here you ſee plainly, that the Adoration paid to God the Father is founded upon his being the Creator of all Things: Look a little further into the next Chapter,

and you will find the ſame Perſons praiſing and adoring Chriſt Jeſus, ſaying, *Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the Seals thereof; for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation; and haſt made us unto our God Kings and Prieſts; and we ſhall reign on the Earth.* Here you as plainly ſee the Worſhip paid to Chriſt to be founded in this, That he was ſlain, and did by his Blood redeem us: Nay, the very Choir of Angels ſing Praiſes to him in the ſame Strain, ſaying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to receive Power, and Riches, and Wiſdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Bleſſing.* From all which it is evident, that the Worſhip paid to Chriſt is founded upon the Redemption, and relates to that Power and Authority which he received from God at his Reſurrection.

In the Text St. *Paul* tells us, *that God has given Chriſt a Name above every Name— that every Tongue ſhould confeſs that Chriſt is the Lord*—— Where Confeſſion implies much more than a bare Acknowledgment that Chriſt is the Lord: It comprehends thoſe Honours and that Worſhip which

thoſe

thoſe who heartily confeſs him to be the Lord will naturally and readily pay him. How this Confeſſion muſt be made, and from what Ground it muſt proceed, the ſame Apoſtle, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, has very fully acquainted us: *This*, ſays he, *is the Word of Faith which we preach, That if thou ſhalt confeſs Jeſus to be Lord*, (for ſo the Words ought to be rendered) *and ſhalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raiſed him from the Dead; thou ſhalt be ſaved.* c. x. v. 8, 9. Here you ſee St. *Paul* requires all Men to honour the Lord Jeſus, upon this Account, becauſe *God hath raiſed him from the Dead.* Every Man muſt *honour the Son, even as he honoureth the Father:* This Honour paid to the Son muſt proceed from this Principle of Faith, That in your Heart you believe that God raiſed him from the Dead, and made him Lord of all. This Confeſſion, grounded upon this Belief, St. *Paul* calls *the Faith which we preach*, that is, the Goſpel Doctrine, that Faith by which a Man ſhall be ſaved: And this is, indeed, the true Goſpel Point to convince Men, that the bleſſed Jeſus, who died for their Sins, did indeed riſe again, and now ſits in Power and Glory at the right Hand of the Majeſty

on high; that he is Lord over all, and able to ſave all who come to the Father by him. Without this Belief, Chriſtianity is a vain Deluſion: For if Chriſt be not riſen from the Dead, and exalted to Glory, *then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is alſo vain.* But if he be riſen from the Dead, if he now reigns in Power at the right Hand of the Almighty, if he received this Power, and if he uſes it in order to our Salvation; can any thing be more abſurd than to deny him thoſe Honours, which are due to him in conſequence of his Glory, and neceſſarily flow from the Relation we ſtand in towards him? The Danger which ſome apprehend, in paying this Duty to their Redeemer, of robbing God of his peculiar Honour, and ſetting up a new and diſtinct Object of Worſhip, in Oppoſition to thoſe plain Commands which confine our religious Service to God alone, will vaniſh away, if we conſider, in the laſt Place,

That all Powers exerciſed by Chriſt, all Honours paid to him, are ultimately referred to God, the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

The Honour and Worſhip paid to the Son muſt either be Part of the Service we owe to God, or it muſt be inconſiſtent with it. If we

we have found out a new Object of Adoration for ourſelves, we are Offenders againſt the Law, which ſays, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve:* But if we honour Chriſt in conſequence of the Power and Glory conferred on him by God, and in virtue of a Command received from God, to honour the Son even as we honour the Father, then the Honour we pay to Chriſt is Part of the Service we owe to God, and ariſes even out of that Command, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.*

Our Saviour has told us, *That all Power is given unto him*; in which he aſſerts both his own and the Father's Authority; his own, as being inveſted with all Power; his Father's, as being the Author and Fountain of all the Power claimed and exerciſed by the Son. He has told us, by his Apoſtle, that at the Conſummation of all Things the Son ſhall reſign his Power, *that God may be all in all*; a ſufficient Declaration, that the Power now exerciſed by him is the Father's Power, which, as it is at laſt to be given up to him, ſo was it at firſt received from him.

From hence it is manifeſt, that the Honour paid to Chriſt is ultimately referred to

God the Father; for the Honour paid to Chriſt being founded in the Power and Glory to which he is exalted, the Honour paid muſt naturally follow the Power and Glory to which it relates, and, at the laſt, terminate in the Fountain and Origin of that Power and Glory, even God the Father. By this Means the peculiar Honour of God the Father is ſecured, whilſt we worſhip and adore the Son. If we adore the Son, it is becauſe of the Relation to the Father: If we honour our Redeemer, that Honour muſt redound to his Glory, who was, in Chriſt, reconciling the World to himſelf: If we apply it to Chriſt as our High Prieſt, at the ſame Time we acknowledge his Glory who anointed him to this Office: If we worſhip him who is Head of the Church, we cannot but adore him who gave Chriſt to be the Head of the Church: If we fall down before him who has all Power and Might, at the ſame Time do we confeſs the Excellency of the Father, who hath given him all Power, and put all Things in Subjection under him. So that we cannot honour the Son, as we ought to do, but we muſt at the ſame Time honour the Father with the Honour due to him. And this ſufficiently

ciently ſhews, that the Goſpel has not ſtrained the Precepts of Natural Religion, in teaching us to honour the Son, whom the Father hath exalted to the right Hand of his Majeſty on high, and given to be the Head over all Principalities and Powers, even to the Conſummation of all Things.

DISCOURSE II.

TITUS ii. 14.

Who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.

THE Expreſſion here made uſe of, *Who gave himſelf for us*, is ſo familiar to the Ears of Chriſtians, and is ſo well underſtood to relate to the Death of Chriſt, and the offering up of himſelf upon the Croſs for the Sins of the whole World, that there is no Need to give Light to it by alledging parallel Places of holy Scripture. The Expreſſion is ſomething fuller in St. *Paul's* firſt Epiſtle to *Timothy*; *Who gave himſelf a Ranſom for all*, ii. 6. As likewiſe, *Gal.* i. 4. *Who gave himſelf for our*

Sins: But the Import and Meaning of the Words is one and the ſame.

This Doctrine of the Goſpel, That the Death of Chriſt was an Offering made of himſelf for the Sins of the whole World, a Price paid for the Purchaſe of Mankind, that they might become *his*, and, together with him, Heirs of Glory, and of a Kingdom that ſhall never fail, is that great Myſtery hid from Ages and Generations, but now made manifeſt by the Preaching of the Apoſtles and Prophets of Chriſt Jeſus.

But, that we may not miſtake, and imagine that, becauſe this Myſtery is ſaid to be *made known* and *manifeſt* to us, therefore we are intitled to call for the Reaſons, upon which this wonderful Adminiſtration of Providence is founded, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that the Goſpel is a Revelation of the Will and Purpoſe of God. The Reaſons upon which he acted, when he ordained this Method of Salvation, are not fully revealed to us; nor have we Authority to ſay they ever will be. Under the Law we meet with many Intimations of God's Purpoſe to ſave Mankind: Under the Goſpel this Purpoſe is opened and proclaimed to all the World: But neither under the Law, nor yet under the

Goſpel, are we inſtructed in the Reaſons of this Proceeding; but, having Life and Immortality ſet before us in God's own Way, we are left to embrace them through Faith, and Confidence in his Promiſe, who is able to perform the Word which is gone out of his Mouth.

And, ſince God has thought fit to offer the Goſpel as a Matter of Faith to the World, and has given his Word, confirmed by Signs and Wonders, as a ſufficient Security for the Performance on his Part, he acts without Commiſſion, who propoſes the Goſpel to the World as a Matter of Science and Knowledge, and the Reſult of mere Reaſon, and pretends to account for the Methods of God's Wiſdom, which are far above and out of his Sight.

If you aſk, how it became neceſſary for Chriſt to die, or why God required a Sacrifice for thoſe Sins, which he might, if he had ſo pleaſed, have freely forgiven? I know but one proper Anſwer for a Miniſter of the Goſpel to make to theſe Inquiries, That God has not admitted him into theſe ſecret Councils, nor ſent him to declare them to the World.

We

We preach the Death of Chriſt a Sacrifice and Expiation for Sin, becauſe appointed by God, who gave his Son to die for the Sins of the World: We preach Chriſt the Reſurrection and the Life, becauſe God hath given him Power to raiſe the Dead: We preach Chriſt the Judge of the World, becauſe the Father hath committed all Judgment to the Son. If you aſk for our Evidence, we anſwer with St. *Peter*, *To him give all the Prophets witneſs, that through his Name whoſoever believeth in him ſhall receive Remiſſion of Sins*, Acts x. 43. We anſwer with our bleſſed Saviour, *The Works which he did in his Father's Name, they bear witneſs of him*, John x. 25. We anſwer with St. *Paul*, *That God hath given this Aſſurance unto all Men, that he will judge the World by Chriſt, in that he raiſed Jeſus from the Dead*, Acts xvii. 31.

Upon this Evidence the Faith of the Goſpel ſtands: The Chriſtian's Hope of Salvation has no Dependence upon the Speculations of curious Inquirers, but reſts upon this immoveable Foundation, *That all the Promiſes of God in Chriſt are Yea, and Amen*; that is, ſure, certain, and irrevocable Promiſes.

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The Death of Chriſt was, as the holy Scripture teaches, foreordained before the Foundation of the World: And ſince God intended, in the Fulneſs of Time, to offer Salvation to the World through Faith in the Sacrifice of his Son, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the Sacrifices before and under the Law were introduced and countenanced to prepare the Faith of the World to receive the Tender of God's Mercies, in virtue of the one Sacrifice to be offered for the Sins of the whole World; that, being accuſtomed to aſk Pardon for Iniquities by the means of Sacrifices, Men might be ready and diſpoſed to receive the Grace of God, when offered under like Conditions.

Sacrifices in the heathen World, as all other Parts of Religion, were corrupted, and applied to corrupt Purpoſes; but they appear at firſt in the religious Worſhip of the beſt and moſt approved Men in the earlieſt Time, and were eſtabliſhed as Part of God's Worſhip in the Church of his own founding among the People of *Iſrael*. Had this been a mere Piece of Superſtition and human Invention in its Original, however we may ſuppoſe God to accept graciouſly the free-will Offering of a weak Mind, yet it is not

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to be ſuppoſed that he would adopt the Superſtition, and make it a neceſſary Part of a Religion of his own Eſtabliſhment. To avoid this abſurd Conſequence, it muſt be maintained, that the Uſe of Sacrifice was introduced by divine Precept for the Atonement of Sins. If Sacrifices were introduced by the Command of God, they had ſuch Virtue as he thought fit to annex to the Performance, in conſequence of the Promiſe which attended them; but if they came in any other Way, it is impoſſible to conceive that there was any Virtue in them. And ſince we are taught that the Sacrifice offered up by Chriſt is the only true expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, it is manifeſt that all other Sacrifices accepted by God owed their Efficacy to the Relation they bore to this one Sacrifice, through the Appointment of him, who gave them for Signs and Figures of better Things to come.

This Reaſoning upon the Principles of Revelation taught us in the Goſpel, may ſhew us, that the Efficacy of Chriſt's Sacrifice is not confined to any particular Age or Time; that Sacrifices in the antient Church of God were Figures and Repreſentations of this one great Sacrifice, as the Euchariſt in the Chriſtian

Chriſtian Church is the Memorial of it; and that the moſt material and ſignificative Part of Worſhip among the People of God has ever been, *the ſhewing forth the Lord's Death*, in Types and Figures before the Coming of Chriſt, and in the Communion of his Body ever ſince.

This Sacrifice conveys to us the Charter of God's Pardon, and, together with it, the certain Hope of Glory and Immortality. We are now no longer our own, that we ſhould obey the Luſts of the Fleſh; but we are his, who hath purchaſed us with the ineſtimable Price of his own Blood; purchaſed us, not to be Slaves, but to be his Brethren, and Heirs with him of the Kingdom of God.

Theſe are great Hopes, and are built upon our Faith in the Promiſes of God through Chriſt Jeſus. How reaſonable this Foundation is, a little Conſideration will ſhew. All Religion ultimately reſolves itſelf into Truſt and Faith in God. Men are not apt to refer thoſe Concluſions to the Head of Faith, which they collect from their own natural Reaſon; and yet, oftentimes, theſe Concluſions have no other Support. In common Affairs of Life, where we have long known Men

Men to act upon Principles of Honour and Virtue, we think ourſelves as ſecure in our Dealings with them, as if we purſued them in every Step with Bonds and Obligations. This is, without Doubt, Truſt and Confidence; and yet it is a natural Concluſion of our Reaſoning upon the Characters and Qualities of Men about us. This is the very Argument upon which Natural Religion forms all its Concluſions: It reaſons from the Character and Attributes of God, and reſts itſelf in this Concluſion, That ſo juſt and reaſonable a Being will deal juſtly and reaſonably with the Children of Men; and what is this but Faith and Truſt in God. To any higher Point of Certainty Natural Religion cannot arrive: For though we may certainly conclude, from the Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Juſtice of God, that he will, in all his Dealings, act wiſely, mercifully, and juſtly; yet we cannot draw this general Concluſion into Particulars, and ſay preciſely what is the very Thing which God will do in any Caſe, or by what particular Method he will bring it about. To determine this we muſt be as wiſe as God; for no Being not infinitely wiſe can, with Certainty, ſay what is the beſt Thing for infinite Wiſdom

to do: For, though we learn from Natural Religion to depend on God for future Happineſs, if we do well; yet Nature preſents us with great Difficulties: We die, and moulder to Duſt, and, in that State, what we are, or where we are, Nature cannot ſay: Whether we are Beings capable of Enjoyment out of the Body; whether we are to have the ſame, or other, or any Bodies; what kind of Happineſs is prepared for us; what Capacities and Powers we ſhall be endowed with, and the like, are Inquiries in which we can have no Light from mere Reaſon. What does Natural Religion do then under theſe Difficulties? Why, it ſupports itſelf upon this one rational Concluſion, That God has Power and Wiſdom to conduct this great Affair in the beſt Method; and to him it may be ſecurely left. And is not this a Religion of Faith, which truſts God for all its deareſt Concerns?

This Faith of Natural Religion is the Baſis and Foundation of Goſpel Faith: For, as Reaſon teaches us to depend upon the Attributes of God's Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Goodneſs, it teaches us alſo to depend on his Veracity: And therefore, upon God's declaring the Method in which he will ſave the

the World, it is altogether as rational an Act of Faith to rely upon the Method which he has declared, as it is in Natural Religion to rely upon his Goodneſs to do the Thing, without being able to aſſign any Method in which it ſhall be done: For if it be reaſonable in Natural Religion to rely upon God's Goodneſs for the Pardon of Sin, is it not as reaſonable, under the Goſpel, to rely upon Pardon through Jeſus Chriſt, God having declared himſelf reconciled to the World through Jeſus Chriſt? The Difference lies not in the Nature of Faith in one Caſe and in the other, but in the Extent of our Knowledge in one Caſe and in the other. Under Natural Religion we ſee only this, that God is merciful; and therefore our Truſt and Faith can go no further than this, to rely on his Mercy: Under the Goſpel God has declared, that he has given his only Son to die for the Sins of the World; and therefore we believe, that through the Death of Chriſt we ſhall receive Pardon and Redemption. In Natural Religion, the general Belief that God will ſave us, implies that ſome Means ſhall be uſed for our Salvation: Under the Goſpel the Means are aſcertained; and therefore the

the Faith of a Chriſtian embraces the Means, as well as the End of this Hope.

In Things which are within our Power to do, or to conceive, we can judge of the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of the Means made uſe of to do them; but in Things which exceed our Power and our Conceptions, we have not this Judgment. We judge the Earth to be a proper Place to receive the Seeds of Vegetables: The Seed of Animals have their proper Repoſitories alſo. But we judge of the Propriety in theſe Caſes from Experience only: We think them proper, becauſe we ſee they are; for we have no Notion of the Propriety of theſe Means, or any clear Conception of the Operations of Nature in one Caſe or the other: And could theſe Methods be propoſed to one quite a Stranger to the Works of Nature; and ſhould he be told, that the Way to make ten Buſhels out of one, was to throw the one into the Ground, and there let it lie and rot, very probably he would think the Propoſal exceedingly abſurd. Now, to give Life to one dead, or to conceive how it is to be given, is the remoteſt Thing that can be from our Powers and Capacities. Let the proper Means therefore be what they will, they muſt be

above our Comprehenſion. In this Article, Natural Religion throws itſelf upon the unlimited Power of God; which is owning itſelf no Judge of the Means for effecting this great Work. The Goſpel has opened to us the Purpoſes of God for effecting this Work: We complain that we do not ſee the natural Tendency of theſe Means to the End propoſed; not conſidering that the Work itſelf is myſterious, and therefore the proper Means to effect it muſt be ſo too.

That the Death of Chriſt ſhould be the Life of the World is a ſurpriſing Propoſition: And yet to ſay this is not a proper Method for redeeming the World, without having a clear View of the whole Diſpenſation of Providence with reſpect to Mankind, is utterly abſurd.

The Scriptures of the New Teſtament have diſcovered to us, that we are the immediate Workmanſhip of the Son of God, *by whom all Things were made which were made; being created by him, and for him.* How far this Relation between Chriſt and the Children of Men made it proper for him to offer, and for God to accept the Sacrifice of his Death, as an Expiation for the Sins of the World, we are not directly informed, nor

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is it expedient for us to be wiſe above what is written: But ſomething of this Sort ſeems to be intimated in Scripture. The Fall of Man was the Loſs of ſo many Subjects to the Chriſt, their natural Lord under God, in virtue of his having created them: The redeeming them was the recovering of them again, the reeſtabliſhing his Power over his own Works. See how St. *Paul* deſcribes this Work of our Redemption: *God hath delivered us from the Powers of Darkneſs, and tranſlated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son*, Col. i. 13. In the next Verſe he recites the Means made uſe of for our Deliverance: *In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveneſs of Sins.* For the Confirmation and Eſtabliſhment of this Doctrine of the Goſpel, he immediately ſubjoins the Relation in which Chriſt ſtands towards us as our Maker, and the new Relation acquired in virtue of his Redemption. In the firſt View, he ſtyles him, *The Image of the inviſible God, the Firſt-born of every Creature; for by him were all Things created—and by him all Things conſiſt.* In the ſecond View, he calls him, *The Head of the Body, the Church, who is the Beginning, the Firſt-born from the Dead, that in all Things*

he might have the Preeminence. As we owed to him our firſt Life, ſo we owe to him our ſecond: The Reaſon of this Diſpenſation of Providence in the Redemption of Mankind is added by the Apoſtle: *For it pleaſed the Father, that in him ſhould all Fulneſs dwell; and (having made Peace by the Blood of his Croſs) by him to reconcile all Things to himſelf.* The Scheme of Thought which runs through this Paſſage of Scripture ſeems to be this; That as Chriſt was Head of the Creation, and made all Things, ſo when God thought fit to reſtore the World from Sin, it pleaſed him that Chriſt ſhould be Head alſo of this new Work, the Firſt-born from the Dead, himſelf, and the Giver of Life to every Believer: For this Purpoſe he made Peace by the Blood of his Croſs, and reconciled all Things to God, that in all Things he might have the Preeminence. Thus much we collect from the Apoſtle's Reaſoning; and diſcern plainly, that the Preeminence of Chriſt, as Head of the Church, is connected and related to his Preeminence as Head of the Creation. Therefore we have Reaſon to believe, that the whole Tranſaction of our Redemption through Chriſt, his Incarnation, his Life on

Earth,

Earth, his Death on the Croſs, the Sacrifice he offered for Sin, and his glorious Reſurrection, are founded in the moſt abſolute Propriety, and are the Reſult of infinite Wiſdom, chuſing the fitteſt Means to accompliſh this great Work.

To go back then from whence we ſet out. This is our Hope and Confidence; That Chriſt *gave himſelf for us.* Let this Hope live with us here, that we may live by it for ever: Let it ever mortify our corrupt Affections on Earth, and teach us to live only to him, who died for us; for we are to the World, and all the Luſts of it, *dead, and our Life is hid with Chriſt: And when Chriſt, who is our Life, ſhall appear, then ſhall we alſo appear with him in Glory.*

DISCOURSE III.

1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, That Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave Sinners.

THESE Words contain the great Charter of the Chriſtian Church, and are the Title by which we claim all the Benefits and Promiſes of the Goſpel. If you inquire upon what Pretence we proclaim the Peace of God to Mankind, upon what Confidence we offer Pardon to Sinners, who according to the Terms of natural Juſtice are *Veſſels of Wrath fitted for Deſtruction*; we anſwer, in the Words of the Text, *That Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave Sinners*; and that in

his Name we preach Salvation, and Peace, and Pardon to Offenders.

This is the Doctrine which, together with the Principles on which it is founded, and the Conſequences naturally flowing from it, diſtinguiſhes the Chriſtian Religion from all other Religions whatever. The Hopes peculiar to Believers are built upon this great Article; and whatever Advantages and Favours we pretend to under the Goſpel, more than can be claimed upon the Terms of Juſtice and Natural Religion, are to be aſcribed to this only, *That Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave Sinners.*

Whoever therefore rejects this Article, he does indeed reject the Chriſtian Religion: I mean not that ſuch an one muſt neceſſarily reject all the Religion contained in the Books of the Goſpel; for the moral Duties of the Goſpel are the very Duties of Natural Religion, improved and carried into Perfection; and the Man who receives not Chriſt for his Saviour and Redeemer, may yet receive the Doctrines of Morality, as taught and explained by him, becauſe he finds them agreeable to the Light of his own Reaſon and Underſtanding.

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The Difference then between a true Deiſt and the Chriſtian ariſes from the Doctrine contained in the Text. They both equally believe the Being and Providence of God; and the Obligations of Morality are equally admitted on both Sides. The Neceſſity of a virtuous Life, in Obedience to theſe Obligations, is no Matter of Diſpute; at leaſt there is no Reaſon why it ſhould be Matter of Diſpute between them. The Deiſt has no Room to doubt in this Caſe; for he has no other Hope than in his Obedience, which of Neceſſity therefore muſt be ſo perfect, as to render him acceptable in the Sight of his equitable Judge: And if the Chriſtian builds ſo far on other Hopes, as to neglect the weighty Matters of the Law, he deceives himſelf, and abuſes the Goſpel of his Saviour.

But then in other Reſpects they differ widely: The Deiſt reckons himſelf, and the reſt of Mankind, to be in that State of Nature in which God created them, and therefore capable of obtaining, by the preſent Powers of Nature, the End deſigned by God for Man: In conſequence of this, as he owns the Duty of obeying God, ſo in right of his Obedience he claims his Favour and Protection.

tection. The Chriſtian is perſuaded, that Man has fallen from the State of Innocence in which he was created; that, being a Sinner, he has no Claim upon God by his Obedience, but ſtands in Need of Pardon; and that, being now weak through Sin, he ſtands in Need of Grace and Aſſiſtance to enable him to perform the Conditions on which the Pardon of God is offered: And he believes that God has indeed pardoned Mankind, and granted them Reconciliation, being thereunto moved by the Obedience and Sufferings of his Son Chriſt Jeſus; and that he hath promiſed, and will ſurely give his Grace and Aſſiſtance to all true Believers in Chriſt, to enable them to perform the Conditions of his Pardon.

What the Chriſtian thus believes, the Goſpel plainly teaches: And theſe are the great Points to be made good; and they are briefly comprehended in the Words of the Text, *That Jeſus Chriſt came into the World to ſave Sinners.*

To illuſtrate and confirm this Propoſition, it will be proper to ſhew,

Firſt, What Reaſon we have to believe that Men were Sinners; and ſtood in Need of Pardon and Salvation.

Secondly,

Secondly, By what Means Chriſt perfected their Redemption and Salvation.

The firſt Queſtion is, What Reaſon have we to believe that Men were Sinners, and ſtood in Need of Pardon?

It is a Saying of St. *Auſtin's*, *Si non periiſſet Homo, non veniſſet Chriſtus*; *If Man had not fallen, Chriſt had not come:* And our Lord ſpeaks to the ſame Senſe, when he tells us, *The Son of Man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt:* And his Anſwer to thoſe who reproached him with converſing with Publicans and Sinners ſtands upon the ſame Ground; *They that are whole need not a Phyſician, but they that are ſick.* Had Man continued in Innocence, the Religion of Nature would have anſwered all the Ends of his Creation: He wanted no Redeemer in his natural State; for it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe that Chriſt came to redeem Man from the State and Condition in which God made him. After the Works of the Creation were finiſhed, God liked them all, and *ſaw every thing that he had made; and behold it was very good:* In this State therefore nothing was wanting to the Perfection of the Creature: God was pleaſed with all his Works, and with Man eſpecially, to whom he

he gave Dominion over the reſt of the World. In this State therefore there was no Want of a Reconciler between God and Man; nor would there ever have been any ſuch Want, had this happy State continued.

That Innocence and Virtue ſhall be rewarded, Guilt and Iniquity puniſhed, is no more than what natural Senſe and Reaſon have always taught the conſidering Part of Mankind: For the Voice of Reaſon and of the Law are in this Reſpect the ſame, *This do, and thou ſhalt live.* And though Man is altered and changed, yet the Nature of Things is ſtill the ſame; and he is no ill Reaſoner, who, from the abſtracted Conſideration of Virtue and Vice, concludes, that Virtue has a juſt Title to Reward, and Vice deſerves Puniſhment: And it is no Wonder that they who argue upon theſe general Views only, ſhould imagine, that moral Virtue may ſtill exalt a Man to all the Degrees of Happineſs that his Nature is capable of.

In the celebrated Queſtion concerning the Merit of good Works, there has aroſe much Confuſion, for Want of diſtinguiſhing between good Works, ſimply and in their own Nature

Nature conſidered, and conſidered as done or performed by the Sons of Men. The firſt is a ſingle Queſtion; Whether Virtue in its own Nature has a Title to Reward? And who will deny it: For as ſure as God is juſt, as ſure as there is a Difference between Good and Evil, he will, he muſt reward the one, and puniſh the other. But when you aſk, Whether the good Works of Men deſerve and merit Reward? you ſtrangely alter the State of the Queſtion; for here not only the Nature of good Works, but the Nature and Condition of Man muſt be conſidered too. If he has already concluded himſelf, if Sentence is gone out againſt him, and his Caſe be irretrievable, your Queſtion muſt be impertinent; becauſe you aſk, Whether he, who is already under Condemnation for his evil Works, may be rewarded for his good Works?

Put the Caſe, that a Man ten Years ago committed a ſecret and barbarous Murder; that ſince he has lived in an unblameable Submiſſion and Obedience to the Government: Aſk then the Queſtion, Whether Submiſſion and Obedience to the Government have a Right and Title to Protection and Defence in Life and Fortune? Every

Man will anſwer, Yes. But aſk again, Whether this Man's Obedience and Submiſſion have the ſame Right and Title? Every Man will anſwer, No: Becauſe the Villainy committed long ſince puts him out of Protection of the Government, and Juſtice is ſtill indebted to him for the horrid Fact; and whenever it meets him will execute upon him Wrath and Vengeance.

I intend not to preſs this Inſtance to a Parallel with our Caſe: But thus much, at leaſt, it ſhews, That Virtue and Morality may, in their own Nature, and in themſelves conſidered, deſerve Reward from a juſt and righteous Being; and yet the Virtue and Morality of Man may not deſerve it. And this is the parting Point between the Patrons of Natural and Revealed Religion; the not conſidering which has made ſome imagine, that, whilſt we defend the Authority of Revelation, we give up the Principles of Reaſon and Nature. Is there not, ſay they, an eſſential Difference between Virtue and Vice? True, there is. Is not Juſtice the Attribute of God; and muſt not a juſt God reward Virtue, and puniſh Vice? True ſtill. Is not this then, ſay they, a ſufficient Foundation for Religion, without recurring

to Grace and Faith, or Miracles, or Myſteries? True, it is, where native Innocence is preſerved, where Religion is *res integra*: But what will you ſay of thoſe who have already offended? Conſult your Principles of Reaſon; the Voice of Nature is, that Vice muſt be puniſhed: If ſo, all that Offenders, all that Sinners can expect from Natural Religion is the juſt Reward of their Sins and Offences: And whether theſe are ſuch Terms and Conditions as ſhould endear Natural Religion to Sinners, Common Senſe ſhall judge.

Were Chriſtianity to be preached to a new Race of Men, created without Spot of Sin, or Stain of Guilt, they might well wonder at the Conditions of Faith and Repentance; at the Doctrine of Salvation by the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and not by their own; and that their Happineſs ſhould depend not upon their own Works, but upon the free Grace and Promiſe of God: They might well aſk, Why ſhould God make that a Matter of free Grace and Promiſe, which muſt be the neceſſary Effect and Conſequence of his Juſtice? Why may we not be ſaved by our own Righteouſneſs, ſince Righteouſneſs has a natural Claim to Happineſs?

Happineſs? What ſhould we repent of, who have done no Harm? or, What other Object have we for Faith than the Juſtice of God, which is the Foundation upon which Religion ſtands? But ſhould this new Race fall from Innocence, and ſtand liable to the Puniſhments of Vice; ſhould you then aſk them where their Hopes were, they would not anſwer, I preſume, in the Juſtice of God, or argue upon the Right that Virtue has to Reward; but, could they expreſs any Hope, it would be in the Mercy and Forgiveneſs of God. And whence muſt this Forgiveneſs come? Is it the Gift of God, or is it the Reward of Sin? If it is the Gift of God, then it is free Grace: If it be the Gift of God, then he alone can tell whether he will give it or no; and you cannot know it unleſs he declares it: What God declares is a Revelation; and all the Aſſurance you can have that he will be as good as his Word is, that you believe and depend upon his Truth for the Performance of what he has promiſed. From whence it evidently follows, that the Religion of a Sinner muſt be a Revealed Religion, and the Principle of it muſt be Faith.

Some, I know, contend, that it may be proved, from the Mercies and Goodneſs of God,

God, that he will forgive Sinners. If ſo, there can be no ſuch Thing as Natural Religion: For it is demonſtrable, from the Juſtice of God, that he muſt reward Virtue, and puniſh Vice; and, if it be demonſtrable too from his Mercy that he muſt forgive Sin, then Natural Religion includes the greateſt Contradiction in Nature, that Sin neceſſarily muſt, and neceſſarily muſt not, be puniſhed. If you ſay only, that it is probable that a merciful God will pity the Folly and Weakneſs of human Kind, and recede from the Strictneſs of Juſtice in his Dealings with them; ſo ſay we too: But Probability cannot infer Neceſſity; and, if it be not neceſſary that he ſhould do it, it muſt then depend upon his Will, whether he will do it, or no; and your Hopes and your Religion muſt be reſolved, not into the Evidence of Nature, but into the Evidence of free Grace; which Evidence can be no other than Revelation; for the Spirit only ſearcheth the deep Things of God, and the Spirit only can bring them to light.

Would you then diſprove Revelation, and diſcard the Religion of Chriſt? For once you muſt prove Mankind to be in a State of In-

nocence and Purity; and then it will be ſenſeleſs to talk of Redemption; for what ſhould Innocence be redeemed from? You muſt ſhew that Nature is not vitiated or corrupted, that the Fleſh does not luſt againſt the Mind; but that there is a mutual Agreement, and the Fleſh obeys the Mind, and the Mind obeys God: Then may you at once reject the Doctrine of Repentance, of free Grace, of Juſtification through the Blood of Chriſt. But, whilſt you endeavour to prove this, try at leaſt to be an Inſtance of it yourſelf: Let Innocence be your outward Garment, and Purity your inward: Let your Hands be void of Evil: Let not your Eye glance upon the large Poſſeſſions of your Neighbour, nor ſo much as one Thought wander towards his Wife or Daughter: Let your Heart be the Fountain of unbounded Love and Good-Will, and the Grave of Malice and Revenge, where all Injuries and Affronts, all Reſentments ſhall lie buried and inactive, and be as though they were not: And when you have gained this experimental Evidence from yourſelf, of the Innocence and Goodneſs of Nature, it will then be Time

Time enough to ſet up for a Patron of her Cauſe, and to aſſert her Right to Heaven upon the Foot of native Righteouſneſs: Till then, at leaſt, how innocent ſoever you may ſuppoſe others to be, yet for your own ſake wiſh that there may be Redemption for Sinners; that God may viſit the World, not in Juſtice, but in Mercy.

Innocence may challenge Juſtice; but Sin can only ſue for Pardon. Juſtice you may have from Nature; but Pardon you muſt have from Grace and Favour. It was an Apophthegm of one of the wiſe Men, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, *Learn to know yourſelf*: And this is the firſt Thing neceſſary in order to chuſe your Religion, rightly to know and underſtand your own Condition. A condemned Malefactor muſt not ſue to his Prince in the ſame Terms that a faithful and deſerving Subject may: The one may repreſent his Service and Obedience; the other has nothing to plead but his Miſery: One applies to the Juſtice and Generoſity of the Prince; the other to his Pity and Compaſſion. Conſider then with yourſelf; Can you ſtand a Trial with God? Can you plead your Services to him, and ſay, Behold thy Servant;

do unto him according to his Works? If you can, Juſtice will do you Right: But if your Heart miſgives you; if your Conſcience cries out to you, Let us not enter into Judgment with our God, for in his Sight ſhall no Man living be juſtified; what have you to do but to ſeek, if happily you may find, the Mercy of God?

The Chriſtian Religion is, in all its Parts, adapted to the preſent Nature and Circumſtances of Mankind; and it is not poſſible to ſee the Reaſonableneſs and Beauty of the Goſpel, without conſidering the Quality and Condition of thoſe, for whoſe Uſe and Benefit it is deſigned: And this, I believe, is one great Reaſon why the Goſpel has been ſo much undervalued in compariſon with Natural Religion, that the End of it has not been rightly underſtood. But if we reflect upon the Dealings of God with Mankind from the Beginning, and the Behaviour of Men towards God, and from thence deduce the State and Condition of Mankind before the Coming of Chriſt; this will enable us to judge what was wanting towards making Mankind happy; and will ſhew us how proper and reaſonable, how perfect and adequate a Means the Goſpel of Chriſt is.

Secondly,

Secondly, Let us conſider by what Means Chriſt has wrought this Redemption.

What the Scripture tells us of the Nature of God, *That he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, i. e. to behold it without being offended at it, is a Truth as diſcernible by the Principles of Reaſon, as by the Authority of Revelation. The Fact then ſuppoſed, which cannot be conteſted, that the World was in a State of Corruption and Degeneracy, it is manifeſt they were fallen under the Diſpleaſure of God, or, in the Language of Scripture, were become *Children of Wrath.* To redeem the World, therefore, it was neceſſary that God ſhould be reconciled to Sinners, and ſhould pardon the Offences which could not be recalled, or which, through Infirmity of Nature, could not be avoided. To think of a Redemption on any other Foot would be abſolutely abſurd; it would be an Attempt to reſcue Sinners from the Diſpleaſure and Anger of God, whether he would or no.

Look now into the Goſpel, and ſee how this Caſe ſtands there. You will find that the only-begotten Son of God took our Nature on him; and that by a perfect Obe-

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dience to the Voice of his Father, and a voluntary Reſignation of himſelf to the Croſs, he made and completed this Reconciliation, and proclaimed the Pardon of God to the loſt Sons of *Adam*. And in this properly conſiſts the Work of Redemption.

But to redeem Men from the Diſpleaſure of God, and leave them in a Condition to draw it upon themſelves afreſh every Day, would have been an uſeleſs Undertaking, and unworthy of his Dignity who was employed in it. To ſecure therefore the Benefit of the Redemption, which he had purchaſed with his Blood, to Mankind, it was neceſſary to reſtore them to ſuch a State as might render them fit Objects for God to take Pleaſure in. This too he did by the powerful Methods preſcribed in the Goſpel for rectifying the corrupt and depraved Wills of Men, by the many Revelations relating to his own ſpiritual Kingdom, given to clear and enlighten their Underſtanding in the Things belonging to their Salvation; the Knowledge of which had been loſt, or ſo darkened and obſcured by the Fall, as to be of no Efficacy in reforming the World. And to render theſe Means effectual to the

Purpoſes

Purpoſes of Salvation, he promiſed and beſtowed the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, to enable Men to receive and to lay hold of eternal Life.

This is a ſhort Account of what Chriſt has done to ſave Sinners. He has reconciled God to you: Have you any Reaſon to be offended? He has procured your Pardon: Has he injured you by ſo doing? If not, what is it any Man has to complain of? It is true, you will ſay, ſo far you have no Reaſon to complain: You are willing to be pardoned; but you cannot ſee that the Death of Chriſt was a proper Means to reconcile God to Sinners. But do you conſider who you are, when you make this Objection? You are the Sinner, the Perſon to be pardoned: Does it belong to you, or to your offended Maſter, to judge what are the proper Means of Reconciliation? If to him only (and ſurely that is the Caſe) why do you debate a Point in which you have no Intereſt or Concern, further than to accept the Bleſſing, upon whatever Motives it was granted? God has aſſured you of his Pardon, and given his Word, confirmed by Signs and Wonders, and by raiſing him

to Life who died for you. If you believe him, you may reſt ſecure that he has not made uſe of improper Means to effect his gracious Purpoſes to Men.

If the Wiſdom of God has ordained Means for the Salvation of Man, of which we cannot fully comprehend the Reaſon, I know but one juſt Conſequence that can be deduced from it; That the Counſels of God are too deep to be fathomed by the ſhort Line of human Reaſon: And ſurely this can be no News, no Surpriſe to a conſidering Man, who ſees every Day the ſame Truth confirmed in an hundred Inſtances. That you live and have a Being in this World, is out of Doubt: But tell me how; ſhew the Spring of Life, the Principle of Motion and Activity within you: And when you do, I may venture to undertake to explain to you the Means by which you ſhall be brought to Life hereafter. But let us leave all theſe curious Inquiries, and be content that God ſhould be wiſer than Man; eſpecially conſidering, that though he has concealed from us the Secrets of his Wiſdom, yet he has fully expoſed to our View his Love to Mankind: His Mercy ſhines out in the fulleſt

Luſtre

Luſtre in every Page of the Goſpel, and there is no Cloud to obſcure it.

The Advantages procured for us, and the Diſcoveries made to us by the Goſpel of Chriſt, do ſo correſpond to the Sentiments of Nature within us, that it is wonderful to find the Pretenſions of Nature ſet in Oppoſition to the Chriſtian Revelation. The moral Duties of the Goſpel are but the Dictates of Reaſon and Nature carried into their juſt Concluſions: The Promiſes of the Goſpel contain the very Hopes of Nature confirmed and made ſure to us. If the Goſpel has promiſed Pardon to Sinners, it is but what Nature teaches all her Children to ſeek for: And if Nature teaches you to hope for Mercy, is your Caſe become the worſe, becauſe God, through Chriſt, has promiſed it? Natural Conſcience tells us we are accountable to him who made us: Is it not the ſame Declaration made in the Goſpel, *That God hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World?* Is not Nature ever looking out, and with unutterable Groans panting after Life for evermore? Has ſhe any Reaſon then to fly from him, who hath *brought Life and Immortality to light through his Goſpel?*

Go

Go then, and learn of Nature to value theſe great Gifts: Attend to her ſilent Voice within you: It will ſpeak in the Language of the Apoſtle, and tell you, *This Saying is worthy of all Acceptation, That Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave Sinners.*

DISCOURSE IV.

1 THESSALONIANS i. 9, 10.

For they themſelves ſhew of us what Manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from Idols, to ſerve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from Heaven, whom he raiſed from the Dead, even Jeſus which delivered us from the Wrath to come.

IN the Verſe before the Text the Apoſtle tells the *Theſſalonians*, that not only the Word of the Lord had ſounded out from them in *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, but their Faith alſo towards God was ſpread abroad in every Place; ſo that there is no Occaſion, adds the Apoſtle, for me to ſay any thing of the Doctrines delivered

vered by me, and received by you: The Thing is well known, and notorious to all the World: *They themſelves ſhew of us what Manner of entering in we had unto you.*

It is evident from hence what Notion the World entertained of the Chriſtian Religion, and the principal Doctrines of it, in the earlieſt Days. All who had heard of our Apoſtle's Teaching knew his Buſineſs to be to turn Men from Idols to ſerve the living God, to give Evidence of the Reſurrection of Chriſt Jeſus from the Dead, and to eſtabliſh a certain Expectation of his coming again with Power and Glory to judge the World. This common Report St. *Paul* allows to be ſo juſt and adequate an Account of his Doctrine, as to leave no Room to enlarge or correct it: *In every Place your Faith to Godward is ſpread abroad; ſo that we need not to ſpeak any thing.*

If we conſider this early Account of the Chriſtian Religion, ſo univerſally received, and ſo well approved by the Apoſtle, we ſhall find it to conſiſt of two principal Parts: The firſt relating to the Service owing to the living God: The ſecond to our Faith in Chriſt, and our Hope and Expectation grounded on that Faith.

Religion,

Religion, conſidered under the Notion of a Service we owe to God, can be no other than Natural Religion, or true uncorrupted Deiſm. This was the old original Religion of Mankind, but had been ſo corrupted and abuſed, that there was hardly any Sign of it left when our Saviour appeared in the World. However rightly ſome few might think, yet they found themſelves obliged to follow the World, and practiſe with the Vulgar. Not many attempted, and none ſucceeded in a Reformation of the public Religion. No Antiquity affords an Inſtance of any People, great or ſmall, who ſerved God upon the Principles of Natural Religion. The only general and effectual Reformation of the World was brought about by the preaching of the Goſpel; which revived and introduced the true antient Religion of Nature, and prepared Men for the Reception of it; and has, by the additional Supports of Revelation, maintained it for many Ages, and probably will maintain it to the End and Conſummation of all Things.

Theſe additional Supports make the ſecond great Branch of Chriſtian Doctrine: They are revived upon the Authority of Revelation,

Revelation, and ſtand upon the Evidence of external Proofs. That we ought to turn from Idols, and ſerve the living God; that we ought to ſerve him in Holineſs and Purity, in conforming ourſelves to the Example of his Juſtice, Equity, and Goodneſs, are Truths which every Man may feel to be ſuch, who has any Reaſon or natural Feeling about him: But that we have been delivered from the Wrath to come by Jeſus the Son of God; that God raiſed him from the Dead, and hath appointed him to be Judge both of the Dead and of the Living, are Articles which no Man's Reaſon can ſuggeſt; which, when ſuggeſted, Reaſon cannot receive upon any internal Evidence, but muſt take them upon an Authority ſufficiently confirmed and eſtabliſhed upon external Evidence.

This Diſtinction, conſtantly attended to, will go a great Way in ſhewing us the true Temper and Genius of the Chriſtian Religion, and the End propoſed by its divine Author. Conſider the Goſpel in its Precepts and Morality; and is there any Doctrine advanced, any Duty required, but what Reaſon muſt admit and approve, or which it can reject without doing Violence

to

to itſelf? Is there, in this Reſpect, any Objection againſt the Chriſtian Religion, but what is and muſt be equally an Objection againſt all Natural Religion? Conſider the Goſpel with reſpect to its new Doctrines, its Articles of Belief: You will find them all deſigned to ſupport and encourage true Religion, and to preſerve the World from falling again into that Confuſion of Idolatry and Superſtition, which for many Ages held it in Darkneſs. This might be ſhewn in the ſeveral Particulars of the Goſpel Diſpenſation: But I ſhall confine myſelf to thoſe ſpecified in the Text.

St. *Paul* teaches us *to wait for the Son of God from Heaven, whom he raiſed from the Dead, even Jeſus which delivered us from the Wrath to come.*

To wait for the Son of God from Heaven, ſignifies to continue with Patience and Well-doing, in Expectation of the Coming of our Saviour and Judge; which Senſe is completely expreſſed, *Philip.* iii. *Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them which walk ſo, as you have us for an Enſample — for our Converſation is in Heaven; from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile Body,*

Body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the Working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all Things unto himſelf.

The Expectation of Chriſt's coming to judge the World is peculiar to Chriſtians; and it is ſupported by the Belief of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, that great and main Point of Faith, which the Apoſtles were commiſſioned to teach and eſtabliſh in the Church of God: For which Reaſon, when an Apoſtle was to be choſen in the Room of *Judas*, the Qualification required in the Perſon to ſucceed was, that he ſhould be one capable of bearing Teſtimony of the Reſurrection of Chriſt. Take the Account in St. *Peter*'s own Words: *Of theſe Men which have companied with us all the Time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out amongſt us, beginning from the Baptiſm of John, unto that ſame Day that he was taken up from us, muſt one be ordained to be a Witneſs with us of his Reſurrection*, Acts i. 21, 22. And, in the next Chapter, St. *Peter*, vindicating to the *Jews* the miraculous Gift of Tongues beſtowed on the Day of Pentecoſt, renders this Account of the Work and Miniſtry of the Apoſtleſhip: *Ye Men of Iſrael, hear theſe*

Words: Jeſus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you, by Miracles and Wonders and Signs, which God did by him in the midſt of you—Him being delivered by the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked Hands have crucified and ſlain, ver. 22. 23. *This Jeſus hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are Witneſſes*, ver. 32. To the ſame Purpoſe again, in the third Chapter, *Ye denied the Holy One and the Juſt, and deſired a Murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raiſed from the Dead; whereof we are Witneſſes*, ver. 14, 15. In the fourth Chapter an Account is given us of the Courage and Boldneſs of the Apoſtles in preaching Chriſt to the Rulers, and of the Succeſs of their Miniſtry among the People: The Sum of it we have in theſe Words; *With great Power gave the Apoſtles witneſs of the Reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus; and great Grace was upon them all*, ver. 33. In the fifth Chapter the Apoſtles are called again before the Council: The High Prieſt charges them with diſobeying the Injunctions given them not to preach in Chriſt's Name: St. *Peter* and the reſt anſwer him and the Council, by opening to them the Commiſſion and

Authority by which they acted, and the Doctrine which they taught: *We ought*, say they, *to obey God rather than Man. The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a Tree: Him hath God exalted with his right Hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins. And we are his Witnesses of these Things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him*, ver. 29, 30, 31, 32. From these Passages of Scripture, taken together, it plainly appears how much the Christian Religion, considered as a distinct System from Natural Religion, depends upon the Belief of the Resurrection of Christ. The Apostles were ordained to be Witnesses of this Article: This Article is the Foundation upon which they build all the Hopes and Expectations peculiar to Christians: If they preach Repentance to *Israel* and Forgiveness of Sins, it is in his Name, whom God raised from the Dead: If they turn to the *Gentiles* with Offers of Peace and Reconciliation, it is still in his Name, whom God raised from the Dead, and ordained to be the Judge of Quick and Dead.

When

When St. *Paul* preached at *Athens*, they thought him an Introducer of ſome new Deities, he talked ſo much of *Jeſus and the Reſurrection*, Acts xvii. 18. Which Doctrine of a Reſurrection he afterwards fully expounded to them, together with the Conſequents belonging to it: *Now*, ſays the Apoſtle, *God commandeth all Men every where to repent, becauſe he hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Aſſurance unto all Men, in that he hath raiſed him from the Dead*, ver. 30, 31. This Paſſage of St. *Paul* gives a very plain Account of the Concern to propagate and eſtabliſh the Article of Chriſt's Reſurrection. The Reſurrection of Chriſt was deſigned to be an Evidence and Aſſurance to the World of God's Intention to judge the World in Righteouſneſs. This new Article was introduced to be a new Evidence of a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, and to ſupport the Sinner's Hopes of Pardon and Reconciliation through the Promiſes of Chriſt, whom God had appointed to be his Judge.

You ſee then the Uſe of this great Article of Chriſtian Faith. Let us conſider now

whether we are beholden to the Goſpel, and how much, for this new Evidence of a Life to come; and what there is in this Article, and the Doctrines grounded upon it, that any ſober Deiſt, or Profeſſor of Natural Religion, can juſtly blame.

Natural Religion pretends to ſupport itſelf upon the Expectation of future Rewards and Puniſhments: It conſiders God as Governor and Judge of the World. Chriſtian Religion ſtands upon the ſame Foundation, and admits for genuine all theſe Hopes and Fears of Nature. Thus far there is no Difference. The Queſtion is, which brings the beſt Proof, and moſt fitted to perſuade the World of this great Truth. Natural Religion appeals to Conſcience, and that Senſe which all Men have of their being accountable for their Actions. The Chriſtian Religion embraces all this Evidence, and whatever elſe can be ſuggeſted by Reaſon to render the Hopes of Futurity probable, or certain: To theſe Evidences it adds the expreſs Teſtimony and Aſſurance of God given to Mankind in the Reſurrection of his beloved Son Chriſt Jeſus.

But what Need, you will ſay, of this new Evidence? Were not the Arguments, which

Natural

Natural Religion affords, ſufficient to ſupport the Belief and Expectation of a future Judgement? If ſo, to what purpoſe is it to call Men from a Dependence on their Reaſon, to rely on the Evidence of Men for the Truth of a Fact ſo uncommon, and in the Nature of it ſo ſurpriſing, as not eaſily to gain Admittance to our Belief? a Fact, which had we ſeen ourſelves, we might perhaps have ſuſpected the Report of our own Senſes, and cannot therefore eaſily refer ourſelves to the Senſes of others, in a Matter of ſo great Moment and Conſequence?

Whoever, in anſwer to this Difficulty, endeavours to weaken and enervate the natural Arguments for a future State, is, I think, very ill employed: To me they appear ſo convincing, that I cannot, ſo amiable, that I would not leſſen your Opinion of them: But then it is certain that they require more Thought and Speculation, to place them before the Mind in their true and ſtrongeſt Light, than the Generality of Men are capable of exerciſing. And whether this be ſo or no, is a Matter fitter to be determined by the Evidence of Hiſtory, than by reaſoning upon the Caſe. We are very ill Judges, under the Light we now

enjoy, how far the Generality of Men could go by the mere Strength of Reaſon, without the Aſſiſtances we have. A right Notion of God is the Foundation of all true Religion; and who is there that thinks himſelf obliged to any thing but his own Reaſon for this Notion? And yet, if this be the Caſe, the the World is mightily improved in Reaſon theſe laſt Ages: For we certainly know many Ages paſt, when the true Notion of God was hardly to be found in any Nation, commonly to be found in none. Since the Publication of the Goſpel the Darkneſs has been diſpelled, and Reaſon ſees and approves the Truths which were before in great Meaſure hid from her Eyes. The Caſe is the ſame with reſpect to the natural Arguments for a future State: The Arguments duly propoſed and conſidered are of great Weight; but yet it is evident they had little Weight in the World for many Ages together. The natural Notion was ſo buried under ſuperſtitious Fables and abſurd Repreſentations, that it yielded no Comfort or Satisfaction; was ſo liable to be expoſed and ridiculed for the extravagant Repreſentations which attended it, that it afforded no Certainty, or even Probability, to ſupport the Hopes of

Virtue: The Vulgar had no Ability to reaſon much on the Caſe; and the Learned who did were full of Doubts and Uncertainties, and found no ſure Ground to ſtand on. To remedy this Evil, God has propoſed a new Evidence to the World: He called his Son from the Grave, and ſhewed him before choſen Witneſſes for many Days; who were ſent into the World to publiſh his Reſurrection, as an Evidence of a future general Reſurrection of all Men, and to ſeal the Truth of their Doctrine with their own Blood.

Now, as to this Evidence, it is in the Nature of it the propereſt for the Generality of Men: It requires no abſtracted Reaſoning, no Refinements, to ſhew the Force of it: Nay, were the wiſeſt Man to chuſe an Evidence for himſelf of the Certainty of a Reſurrection, I know not what he could deſire more than to ſee one riſe from the Dead.

As to thoſe who pretend to be real and true Deiſts, I cannot ſee what there is in this Evidence to offend them: The main Thing we prove by it they acknowledge to be true, That God will judge the World. Since then the Chriſtian Religion has no

private Deſign to ſerve by this Evidence, but produces it in Confirmation of that general Senſe of Nature which all true Religion does admit, why ſhould it be ſuſpected of Deceit?

Beſides, the Belief of a future State, ſupported by the Evidence of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, is applied to no other Purpoſes in the Chriſtian Religion, than every wiſe and good Man would deſire it ſhould be applied to, were it a Matter to be ſubmitted to his Choice. Let us ſee: The Goſpel labours to aſſure us of the Certainty of our Reſurrection to eternal Life; and, not content with the common Evidence of Reaſon for a future State, has given us a new Proof from the very Hand and immediate Power of God: There is ſuch a Concern ſhewed in the Goſpel for fixing and eſtabliſhing this Proof, that we may be ſure this Proof was provided for the ſake of carrying on the great End and Deſign of the Goſpel, whatever it is: So that if there is any thing amiſs, any Deluſion or Deceit in the Goſpel, we may certainly find it leaning upon this Article of the Reſurrection for its Support. But now, what does the Goſpel require of us, in virtue of our Belief of this Article? Why,

Why, nothing but what Reaſon and Natural Religion require of us; to live ſoberly and righteouſly, in Obedience to God, and in Love with our Brethren. Where is there any Ground now for Suſpicion in the Caſe? Men do not uſe to play Tricks, or endeavour to impoſe upon the World for nothing. Shew us then any one Uſe made of this Article in the Goſpel, but what all ſober-minded Men will allow to be a juſt and proper Uſe, and we will part with our Evidence: But if no ſuch Thing can be ſhewed, never ſuſpect any Guile or Deceit in the Evidence calculated to ſerve and promote ſuch noble and worthy Purpoſes.

One Thing there is in the Scripture Account of a future State that is new, the Deſignation of the Man Chriſt Jeſus for Judge of the Quick and the Dead: But this is ſuch a new Thing as is liable to no Objections on the Part of Natural Religion: For it is no Part of Natural Religion to maintain that God muſt do every thing immediately by himſelf, and in his own Perſon, without uſing the Agency or Miniſtry of other Beings. This Deſignation of Chriſt to be Judge of the World is no Impeachment of the Authority of God; The Son acts by the

Father's Commiſſion, who hath given all Judgment to him: It makes no Change in the Nature of the Judgment: We ſhall anſwer for nothing to Chriſt, but what our Reaſon tells us we are accountable for. So that take in all the Circumſtances belonging to this Article of Chriſtian Faith, and yet there is nothing for you to do, nothing for you to expect, but what you are already perſuaded you ought to do and expect, if you are in Truth ſo honeſt and ſincere a Profeſſor of Natural Religion as to believe in God, and that he will judge the World in Truth and Juſtice. This Difference there is between you and a Chriſtian Believer: You have ſuch Hopes of Futurity as Reaſon and Reflection can furniſh out: The Chriſtian has the ſame Hopes, and in the ſame Degree; but has moreover the expreſs Promiſe and Teſtimony of God, confirmed by the Reſurrection of his only Son, to ſtrengthen his Expectations of Immortality. Suppoſe the Chriſtian miſtaken, even then he ſtands upon the ſame Ground that you do; ſuppoſe his Faith to be well eſtabliſhed, he ſtands upon much better, and is able to render to himſelf a better Account of the Hope that is in him. This is the Advantage

we

we draw from this great Article of Faith; an Article introduced to ſerve true Religion, founded upon an Evidence of ſuch Force, that it can make its Way to every Underſtanding, and wants no Help from Philoſophy to ſupport it.

Thus you ſee how the Goſpel has ſupplied the Defect of Natural Religion in this momentous Point: How wiſely this Proviſion of the Goſpel was made, let Experience bear witneſs. Whereever the Goſpel prevails, the Hopes of Immortality are clear and diſtinct: The preaching the Reſurrection of Chriſt conveys to the loweſt Member of the Church of Chriſt a clear Conception of his own future Condition.

The Reſurrection itſelf was indeed a great and ſtupendous Work; but the Hand that performed it was greater. No one, who believes that God made all Men at firſt, can poſſibly doubt of his Power to raiſe them again from the Grave. Allow, you will ſay, to the Power of God all that can be deſired; yet ſtill the Reſurrection remains to be proved, as to the Fact; and proved it is by the concurrent Teſtimony of Eye-Witneſſes, who have given not only their Words, but their very Lives, in confirmation

firmation of this Truth: And ſurely they were in very good earneſt, when they embraced and taught the Doctrine upon ſuch hard Terms. And methinks no ſerious Man ſhould be very hard of Belief in this Caſe. Did the Article of the Reſurrection make any Alteration in our Notions of God, or of Religion; did it bring any new Burden upon us of any Sort, it would be no Wonder to ſee Men very careful how they admitted it: But now that it requires nothing at our Hands but what Reaſon and Nature require, is attended with no Burden or Expence to us, pretends only to eſtabliſh and confirm the Hopes of Nature, what Pretence for being ſo very ſcrupulous? Admit the Article, your Hopes are much improved, your Duty nothing increaſed—Reject the Article, your Duty is the ſame, and your Hopes much leſs.

How kind a Proviſion has the Goſpel made for our Weakneſs! how powerfully has it ſupported the Intereſt of true Religion, by furniſhing the World with ſo plain, and yet ſo ſtrong a Proof of a future State, and a Judgment to be executed in Righteouſneſs, by the Man Chriſt Jeſus, whom God raiſed from the Dead, and hath ordained

dained to be the Judge of all the World! Let us hold faſt this Hope; let this Hope be our conſtant Encouragement in doing the Work of the Lord; let us do his Work chearfully and heartily, knowing for certain that *our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.*

DISCOURSE V.

PROVERBS IX. 10.

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom; and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding.

THE Advantages which we may expect to reap from Religion are many and great, but not all equally certain: Some are expoſed to the Chances and Caſualties of human Life, and depend upon Circumſtances that are not under our own Conduct and Government: Hence it is that the beſt Men are ſometimes expoſed to the ſevereſt Trials and ſharpeſt Afflictions. But there are two Things which ſincere Religion can never fail of attaining; one of which is the greateſt Ingredient, nay, the very Foundation

Foundation of all Happineſs in this World; the other is the Happineſs and Immortality which wait for us in the World to come: This Bleſſing we can only enjoy now through Faith and Hope; but the other is preſent with us, the certain Conſequence and neceſſary Attendant upon a Mind truly virtuous and religious; I mean, the Peace and Tranquillity, the Eaſe and Satisfaction of Mind, which flow not ſo much from a Senſe of our having punctually and exactly diſcharged our Duty in all Reſpects, which is more than ever we may hope for, but from a due Senſe of God and Religion, and the Uprightneſs of our Deſires and Intentions to ſerve him. This Advantage is not, properly ſpeaking, a Reward given or beſtowed upon the Virtuous; but it ariſes from the Nature of Things, from the Frame and Contexture of our Souls: It is Virtue's own Child, her natural Offspring, and can never leave or forſake her: For as long as Men have a Senſe of Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, ſo long will they condemn and puniſh themſelves for tranſgreſſing their Obligations; ſo long will they find Peace and Satisfaction in their Obedience.

Since

Since then Nature has given us Notice of the Being of the Almighty, and ſhewn us the Relation we ſtand in towards him, and conſequently the Duty and Service which we owe him; it neceſſarily follows, that this Senſe, rightly adjuſted, and duly purſued, in a regular and honeſt Diſcharge of our Duty towards God, muſt breed in our Minds true Peace and Comfort; and, conſequently, that true Religion muſt be the Source and Spring even of our temporal Happineſs and Enjoyments. But yet look into the World, and the Face of Things has quite a different Appearance: Religion is fearful, ſuſpicious, full of Doubts and Miſgivings of Heart, never ſatisfied with itſelf, always ſeeking, but ſeldom finding where to fix itſelf in Reſt and Tranquillity: Hence it comes to paſs, that ſome, not rightly conſidering the Nature and Cauſes of Things, miſconceive concerning Religion itſelf, and think it better to lay aſide all Pretences to it, than perpetually to fluctuate in the troubled Ocean of Doubts and Uncertainties, that encompaſſes it round about. And thus Superſtition, by making many miſerable in the Purſuit of Religion, makes others, to avoid being loſt in that Gulph, throw themſelves

into another of Atheiſm and Irreligion, which is a much deeper. In theſe two Extremes, of Infidelity on one Side, and Superſtition on the other, true Religion is loſt, and, together with it, that Peace and Comfort, and Eaſe of Mind, which belong to it: For, view God from which of the two Extremes you pleaſe, his Appearance muſt be dreadful: You may ſee him in the Terrors of Majeſty and Power; but the kinder Rays which flow from his Mercy and Goodneſs and Benevolence towards Mankind, will be intercepted from your Eyes.

The atheiſtical Unbeliever, if ever he ſo far forgets himſelf as to ſuppoſe the Being of a God for a Time, ſees nothing of him but the Judge and the Avenger, and haſtens back to his Infidelity to ſkreen him from the Wrath and Juſtice, which even in Imagination were inſupportable. Superſtition is ſo perpetually encompaſſed with a thick Cloud of its own Fears and Suſpicions, that it cannot diſcern the Beauties and Holineſs of the Creator: Every frightful Spectre, that walks in its own Imagination, is miſtaken for the Deity; and Superſtition adores it, as the wild Indians are ſaid to worſhip the

the Devil, not for Love, but for Fear. The Caſe then being thus, that Mankind is in a great Meaſure robbed of the preſent Comfort and Pleaſure of Religion, either by Infidelity or Superſtition; it is very well worth our while to ſearch into the Cauſes that lead to this Unhappineſs, to ſee what it is that has corrupted this living Spring, this Fountain of Delight, and turned its Waters into Gall and Bitterneſs.

The Words of the Text, rightly underſtood, will not only afford us an Occaſion for this Inquiry, but will alſo direct us in it; and, by ſhewing us the Principles of true Religion, will help us to diſcover the Errors and Miſconceits which are introductive of Irreligion and Superſtition.

The Fear of the Lord, ſays the wiſe King, *is the Beginning of Wiſdom; and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding.* This is not the only Place where he expreſſes himſelf in this Manner: The ſame Thing, with ſome ſmall Variety in the Expreſſion, is more than once repeated again in the Book of *Proverbs:* It is to be met with alſo in the Pſalmiſt, in the very ſame Words almoſt; and the Thought occurs frequently in the inſpired Writers: So that this ſeems to be a common

Maxim, or Principle of Religion, that runs through all the ſacred Records, and by which all good and wiſe Men have guided themſelves in the great and momentous Concern of Religion.

In ſpeaking to theſe Words, I propoſe to myſelf theſe two Things:

Firſt, To ſhew, That the Text, and other the like Paſſages of Holy Scripture, will be found, upon examining the Senſe and Reaſon of them, to contain this general Propoſition, That a juſt Conception of God, of his Excellencies and Perfections, is the true Foundation of Religion.

Secondly, That this juſt Conception of God is the right Rule to form our Judgements by, in all particular Matters of Religion, and the only Thing that can ſecure us from either Atheiſm or Superſtition.

Firſt, I will endeavour to ſhew you, That the Text, and other the like Paſſages of Scripture, will be found, upon examining the Senſe and Reaſon of them, to contain this general Propoſition, That a juſt Conception of God, of his Excellencies and Perfections, is the true Foundation of Religion: *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom.*

To this Purpoſe it might be thought ſufficient perhaps by ſome to obſerve, that Fear, whatever limited or enlarged Notion you underſtand it in, is not a voluntary Paſſion: We cannot be afraid or not afraid of Things juſt as we pleaſe; but Fear neceſſarily relates to, and ariſes from, the Notion or Conception we have of the Thing feared: We fear any Being in Proportion to the Power and Will which we conceive that Being to have either to hurt or to protect us. The different Kinds of Fear likewiſe are no otherwiſe diſtinguiſhable from one another, than by conſidering the different Conceptions or Ideas of the Things feared: For Fear, being the neceſſary Effect of ſuch Conceptions, muſt differ according to the Difference of the Conceptions. If we join to great Power, great Malice and a ſettled Reſolution to do Miſchief, ſuch an Object ſtrikes with Terror and Confuſion, and breeds in our Minds a baſe and ſlaviſh Fear: If we add to great Power, great Goodneſs and Benevolence, ſuch an Object creates an Awe and Reverence, and fills our Hearts with filial Fear and Veneration. When therefore we ſay, the Fear of this, or Fear

of that, does ſo or ſo, we can have no Senſe of the Propoſition, without having a Notion of the Thing feared. The Fear of a Tyrant, and the Fear of a Father, are very different Paſſions; but he that knows not the Difference between a Tyrant and a Father, will never be able to diſtinguiſh theſe Paſſions. When therefore we read that *the Fear of God is the Beginning of Wiſdom*, we can have no Underſtanding of the Words without having a juſt Conception of God, by which alone we can judge of the Nature of godly Fear, and of its Operations. Allowing therefore that the wiſe King, by *the Fear of the Lord*, means a right and due Fear, it neceſſarily ſuppoſes a right and due Conception of the Lord, from which only that right and due Fear can flow, which is the Mother of Wiſdom and Underſtanding: For if Men miſconceive concerning God, either as to his Holineſs and Purity, to his Mercy or Juſtice, their Fear of him will not produce Wiſdom; which is evident from the infinite Follies of the heathen World, which grew out of their falſe Fear and Reverence of their Gods. This Propoſition therefore, *The Fear of God is the Beginning*

of

of Wiſdom, is equivalent to this, A juſt Notion and Conception of God is the Beginning of Wiſdom.

Having deduced this Expoſition from the Order and Nature of Things in themſelves, let us try the other Method, which is more familiar, and ſee whether we can come to any Expoſition of theſe Words, which will not lead to the ſame Thing.

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom: We are to conſider what is meant by the *Fear of the Lord.* The Reaſon of the Inquiry is evidently this, That we experience in ourſelves different Kinds and Degrees of Fear, which have very different Effects and Operations: Some ſtupify the Senſes, and rob us of all Wiſdom and Underſtanding: Others render us active and induſtrious, and give an Edge to our Invention how to ſhun and avoid the Thing we fear. Of what Sort then is the Fear of the Lord? Is it an abject ſlaviſh Fear? No, certainly: All Expoſitors agree to warn you againſt this Senſe and Interpretation of Fear. But were you to aſk the Reaſon why the Fear of God is not a ſlaviſh Fear, there is only this Reaſon to be given you, Becauſe God is no Tyrant: And I ſuppoſe every Man of Senſe will

admit this for a good Reaſon: And what elſe is this but adjuſting the Senſe of Fear from the true Notion and Conception of God? The Properties of religious Fear, which are mentioned in Scripture, are various: *The Fear of the Lord is clean*, ſays the Pſalmiſt: *The Fear of the Lord is to hate Evil*, ſays *Solomon*; and again, *It is a Fountain of Life*; and again, *In the Fear of the Lord is ſtrong Confidence.* Try all theſe in the ſame Way, and you will find they are deducible only from the Notion and Conception of God, and are not to be underſtood without it. The Fear of God therefore is not to be expounded from the Nature of Fear, conſidered as a diſtinct Paſſion of the Mind; but by conſidering the natural Effect that a juſt Senſe and Notion of God has upon the Mind of a rational Creature: For the Fear of God ſignifies that Frame and Affection of Soul, which is the Conſequence of a juſt Notion and Conception of the Deity. It is called the Fear of God, becauſe, as Majeſty and Power are the principal Parts of the Idea of God, ſo Fear and Reverence are the main Ingredients in the Affection that ariſes from it; Not but that Love and Honour and

Admiration

Admiration are included in the Notion. And in this Latitude the wiſe King moſt certainly underſtood it, when he ſaid, *In the Fear of the Lord is ſtrong Confidence:* For Confidence is no Effect of Fear, properly ſo called; but it is a natural Effect of a juſt Senſe of the Almighty's Power and Goodneſs.

There is but one Thing that occurs to me that ſeems to look like a Difficulty in this Way of arguing, which is this: If the Fear of God denotes that Senſe and Affection of Mind which is the natural Effect of a true Notion and Conception of God, it ſhould ſeem that none ſhould be void of the Fear of God, but thoſe only who want right Notions of God; and yet we know there are Sinners againſt Knowledge, who diſcover no Fear of God, though they can diſcourſe as rationally as others upon his Attributes and Perfections. There are two Ways by which Men may diſcover that they have a Senſe of the Fear of God: One indeed is by acting agreeably to it: But there is another, which is by Conſcience: Self-Condemnation, for acting contrary to the Fear of God, is an evident Token of the Senſe of that Fear. But if there are any Inſtances

Inſtances where neither of theſe Signs are diſcoverable, there is a further Account to be given; for it is not merely the ſpeculative Notions of God which produce this Senſe, but there muſt be a Perſuaſion alſo, that there is a real Being to whom theſe Ideas actually belong: Without this the Notion is idle and fruitleſs: We may raiſe in our Fancies very terrible Objects; but they produce little or no Effect, as long as we contemplate them as the mere Creatures of our Imagination. In like Manner the Notion of a God may cauſe little Change in the Fool's Heart, which ſays there is no God. And though I am far from thinking that there are many Atheiſts in the World, yet there is in many an Heart a ſecret lurking Infidelity, or rather a Want of a due Belief and Perſuaſion of the Reality of the Things inviſible; which makes Religion appear ſo cold and formal, ſo void of Life and Activity. Where this is the Caſe, there wants a juſt Conception of God; and no Wonder there ſhould want alſo a due Senſe of the Fear of the Lord. But let us proceed to the ſecond Thing, which was to ſhew,

That this juſt Conception of God is the right Rule to form our Judgments by in Matters

Matters of Religion, and the only Thing that can ſecure us from either Atheiſm or Superſtition.

Hitherto we have conſidered the true Meaning of the Fear of God. We are now to conſider what is affirmed of it: *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom*; taking Wiſdom here to mean true Religion, as it often does in the Books of *Solomon*, and in the Pſalms of *David*. When it is ſaid that *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom*, you are not to underſtand merely that the Notion of God is, in Point of Time, or Order of Nature, prior to Religion; which, though it be true, yet is it not the whole of what is taught concerning the Fear of God. All Religion, indeed, has a Relation to God; and therefore without the Senſe and Notion of a Deity there can be no Religion: But there is Religion which is Folly and Superſtition, that better ſuits with any Name than that of Wiſdom: And, therefore, if the Fear of God does only in general ſhew us the Neceſſity of Religion, and does then leave us to take our Chance in the great Variety of Forms and Inſtitutions that are to be found in the World, it may be our Hap to learn Folly as well as Wiſdom,

Wiſdom, upon the Inſtigation of this Principle. But, in Truth, the Fear of God does not only ſhew us the Neceſſity of Religion, but likewiſe teaches us wherein true Religion, which is indeed Wiſdom, does conſiſt; and enables us to judge of our Offering, whether it be fit to be laid before the Almighty.

In Natural Religion this is evidently the Caſe; becauſe in that State there is no Pretence to any other Rule, that can come in Competition with this. It is from the Notion of a God that Men come to have any Senſe of Religion; and it is by the ſame Principle only that they determine this to be a proper Part of Religion, that to be otherwiſe. When we conſider God as Lord and Governor of the World, we ſoon perceive ourſelves to be in Subjection, and that we ſtand obliged, both in Intereſt and Duty, to pay Obedience to the Supreme: But what is this Obedience? and in what Acts does it conſiſt? For this we muſt recur to our natural Notion of God. If we conceive him to be holy, pure, and juſt, we muſt neceſſarily judge that he will be pleaſed with no Service but what is agreeable to Holineſs, Purity, and Juſtice: If we conceive him to

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be a Being good and merciful, a common Father to Mankind, whoſe Love is without Partiality, and equal to all his Creatures, we muſt, upon this View, conclude, that Religion binds us not to be hurtful or injurious to any of the Sons of Men; becauſe it is a Contradiction to think that we are bound to ſerve and obey God, and yet at Liberty to injure and abuſe thoſe whom he moſt affectionately loves. Mutual Love and Benevolence may be a moral Duty, ariſing from the Relation of Man to Man, upon mere Principles of Reaſon, excluſive of Religion; but it becomes Part of our Religion from ſuch Conſideration of God's Nature as I have juſt now mentioned. Take from the Notion of God any of the moral Perfections that belong to it, and you will find ſuch Alteration muſt influence Religion likewiſe, which will degenerate in the ſame Proportion as the Notion of God is corrupted. The ſuperſtitious Man, viewing God through the falſe Perſpectives of Fear and Suſpicion, loſes Sight of his Goodneſs, and ſees only a dreadful Spectre made up of Anger and Revenge: Hence Religion becomes his Torment, and he thinks, the worſe he uſes himſelf, the more he ſhall pleaſe God; and the beſt

Service

Service he can pay, is that which renders him moſt miſerable.

There are other Kinds of Superſtition, which, though they have leſs of Torment and Anguiſh, have not more of Reaſon or Religion: Such are they which have turned Religion into a Trade, and found ſomething to offer God in Exchange for Virtue and Holineſs. In all theſe Caſes the Spring is corrupted, the Notion of God is loſt, or not attended to: What Notion has that Man of God, who thinks that waſhing his Hands three or four Times a Day is Part of Religion; who imagines that Penances and Pilgrimages, or any thing elſe, is equivalent to Virtue and Holineſs? Search your Notion of God: Conſider his Holineſs and Purity, and ſee what you can find to make you think that beating yourſelf, or waſhing yourſelf, or parting with your Money, will pleaſe him like Virtue and Holineſs. Theſe muſt appear to be abſurd Follies to any Man who will attend to this Principle. In the Heathen World, ſome happily diſcovered ſome Glimmerings of the true Holineſs and Perfections of God, and were to maintain Virtue upon the Foot of Religion: Others perhaps were much better Men than their Principles of Religion

Religion led them to be. The natural Senſe of Good and Evil, and the Relation of Man to Man, led ſome generous Spirits into the right Way. But in this Caſe Goodneſs was not the Effect of Religion, but of a rational Nature: It was a political or ſociable Virtue, but not a religious one.

It is plain then, both from Reaſon and Fact, that a juſt Conception and Senſe of God is the Beginning of Wiſdom, the Fountain from which true Religion flows: By this it is that you may diſtinguiſh between true and falſe Religion, ſince that only is true Religion which is agreeable to the Nature of God. *God is a Spirit*, ſays our bleſſed Lord, *and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.* Here you are referred to the ſame Principle, and by the beſt Authority: You ſee here our Lord himſelf inferring the Nature of Worſhip from the Nature of God.

This may be true, perhaps you will ſay, upon the Foot of Natural Religion, where we have nothing but natural Notions to direct us: But what is it to us, who have the ſurer Word of Prophecy to guide and inſtruct us? In anſwer to this I would obſerve, that Natural Religion is the Foundation

upon which Revelation ſtands; and therefore Revelation can never ſuperſede Natural Religion without deſtroying itſelf. The Knowledge of God is, in the Nature of Things, antecedent to Revelation; for there can be no Reaſon for attending to the Voice of God till we know who God is. The natural Notion of God then is the Foundation of Revelation, as well as of Natural Religion; and, conſequently, nothing contrary to this Notion can be admitted for Revelation, any more than for Natural Religion.

There is indeed a Difference, which ought always to be remembered, and for want of which ſome have imagined they have diſcovered great Oppoſition between Natural Religion and Revelation, where in Truth there is none. The Difference is this: In Natural Religion nothing can be admitted that may not be proved and deduced from our natural Notions; for every thing muſt be admitted for ſome Reaſon; and in Natural Religion no Reaſon can take Place, but this Agreeableneſs of the Thing to our natural Senſe: But in Revelation it is otherwiſe; for Revelation introduces a new Reaſon, The Will of God, which has, and ought to have, the Authority of a Law with

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us. Nor is it plain, from any natural Principle, that God cannot enlarge our Duty, or oblige us to any thing but what Nature has already obliged us to: It is certain he cannot contradict his own Nature; and therefore he can teach us nothing contrary to the natural Senſe he has given us of himſelf: But, as he has Authority to give us Laws, he may add to our Duty and Obligations as he ſees fit. And therefore it is not neceſſary all Parts of a Revelation ſhould be ſuch as may be proved by natural Reaſon: It is ſufficient that they do not contradict it; for the Will of God is a ſufficient Reaſon for our Submiſſion.

But, however, the Eſſentials of Religion, even under Revelation, muſt be tried and judged by the ſame Principle. No Revelation can diſpenſe with Virtue and Holineſs; for it may as reaſonably diſpenſe with our believing the Being of a God, as with our believing that he can or would vacate the Obligations to Virtue and Holineſs: For to remove God out of the World, and to change the eſſential Properties of his Nature, is one and the ſame Thing. We may be ſure then that all ſuch Doctrines, all ſuch Rites and Ceremonies, as tend to ſubvert

true Goodneſs and Holineſs, are not of God's teaching or introducing.

Nor is there, I believe, a more certain Way to keep ourſelves ſtedfaſtly in the Purity of the Goſpel, than by keeping our Eye conſtantly on this Rule. Could Enthuſiaſm, or deſtructive Zeal, ever have grown out of the Goſpel, had Men compared their Practices with the natural Senſe they have of God? Would they not have ſeen, that to defend even Religion by Cruelty and Bloodſhed muſt be hateful in the Sight of God? Could Religion ever have degenerated into ſuch Folly and Superſtition, as in ſome Places it has done, had the true Notions of God been preſerved, and all religious Actions examined by it?

On the other Hand, ſome there are, who, taking Religion to be what it appears to be in the World, find ſo much Folly, and Superſtition, and Uncertainty in it, that they have choſen, as the ſafer Way, to reject all Religion: But could Men have judged thus perverſely had they attended to the true Rule, and formed their Notions of Religion from the Nature and Wiſdom of God, and not from the Follies and Extravagancies of Men? How does the Folly and Perverſeneſs of

others

others affect your Duty to God? or, How came you abſolved from all Religion, becauſe others have corrupted theirs? Suppoſe the People deceived, and the Prieſts either ignorant or ſuperſtitious; what then? Does the Error of one, or the Ignorance of the other, deſtroy the Relation between you and God, and make it reaſonable for you to throw off all Obedience? The Fear of God will teach you another Sort of Wiſdom. This therefore you ought to cultivate and improve, and preſerve free from Error or Corruption, as your ſureſt Guide in all Doubts, and as the true Principle of religious Wiſdom.

DISCOURSE VI.

PART I.

LUKE X. 29.

But he, willing to juſtify himſelf, ſaid unto Jeſus, And who is my Neighbour?

THE Precepts of the Law and of the Goſpel being conceived in general Terms, and expreſſed in the moſt eaſy and familiar Manner, Men of ſpeculative Minds, whoſe Buſineſs is rather Inquiry than Practice, have taken ſo much Pains to adjuſt the Limitations and Reſtrictions which they conceive to be applicable to the general Rule, that in many Caſes the Duty has been loſt in the Explication; and

the Precept has been ſo pared and cut to the Quick by Exceptions, that it is no longer of any Uſe or Service in common Life.

The Law of God commands us *to love our Neighbours as ourſelves*; the Interpretation of which will better come from our Hearts than our Heads; for we cannot help feeling the Senſe of our Duty as long as we attend to the Motions of Nature within ourſelves: Our own Wants and Infirmities will ſhew us the Matter and the Extent of our Obedience; and Self-Love will direct us in the Practice and Execution: But when Men come to ſpeculate upon the Point, and to define the exact Bounds of Love, and to determine nicely how far the Notion of Neighbourhood is to be extended, the Event too commonly is, that there is but very little Love left to be diſpoſed of among our Neighbours, and, that it may the better hold out, but very few Neighbours left to ſhare in our Love. Call a covetous Man to the Exerciſe of this Duty in an Inſtance of Charity; ſhew him a Man oppreſſed with Poverty and Hunger, cloathed in Rags, and deſtitute of all the Comforts and Supports of Life, and bid him love this poor Wretch as himſelf: He will tell you, perhaps, the

Law is excellent and good, and he does love the Man, and pities his Misfortunes; but he has nothing to ſpare: He is not obliged to love another better than himſelf; and therefore it is unreaſonable to expect that he ſhould ſtraighten and pinch himſelf to enlarge the Conveniencies of others: He grudges him no Degree of Love, and heartily wiſhes him at Eaſe and in Plenty; but cannot afford any thing towards it out of his Little. Or perhaps he will queſtion upon what Title this Man pretends to be his Neighbour: He is ſure he never ſaw him before, nor ever heard that he lived near him; and if every body that will may claim to be his Neighbour, there will be no End of it; and he may ſoon give his Neighbours all he has, if every one that begs muſt be his Neighbour. There is Room in all other Inſtances of our Duty for the like Subterfuges; and as long as Men find Comfort in ſuch Excuſes for their Negligence and Diſobedience, they will never want Invention to furniſh them.

It may ſeem ſtrange perhaps that the Laws of God ſhould be liable to this Uſage; ſince, being the Tranſcript of perfect Wiſdom, and the Work of him who not only knows but

foreſees the Secrets of all Hearts, we might expect to find them ſo guarded and fenced about, and made ſo plain and expreſs in all Caſes, that it ſhould have been in no Man's Power to queſtion the Senſe or Meaning of the Precept, or to cover his Iniquity with the leaſt Umbrage of an Excuſe drawn from the Interpretation of holy Scripture: But there are very good Reaſons to be given why the Law of God is not ſo explicit and particular. Were the Scripture to deſcend into the Conſideration of all Caſes, and to ſtate the exact Bounds of our Duty in all poſſible Circumſtances of Life, we might ſay perhaps, without being much beholden to a Figure of Speech, that the World itſelf could not contain the Things that ſhould be written. A Law extending itſelf to ſuch Variety of Caſes and Circumſtances would be altogether uſeleſs, and Men might grow old in Sin and Iniquity before they could poſſibly learn their Duty, or extract the Rules proper for their own Uſe out of the infinite Variety of Laws, many of which have no Reſpect to them or their Circumſtances.

Beſides, God gave every Man a Law to direct him, when he made him a reaſonable Creature,

Creature, and expects Obedience in virtue of that Law of Nature. The Gospel was given not to exclude, but to assist the Exercise of Reason: And therefore to require a Law so exact and circumstantial, that there should be no Room for the Use or Obedience of Reason, is to preclude Men from those nobler Instances of Duty which flow from the right Use of their Minds, and which are the proper Sacrifice offered by a rational Soul to God. The Uprightness of a Man, and the Integrity of his Mind, are as discernible in his Application of the Rules of the Gospel, as by any outward Acts whatever. A Man who reads in the Gospel that he ought to love his Neighbour as himself, and from his own Sense and Reason supplies the Law with this noble Comment, That all the Sons of Men are his Neighbours, is as much a better Christian than the Man who extends the Law only to his Townsmen or his Countrymen, as his Neighbourhood is more universal.

Further, a Law descending to every particular Case would be of no manner of Service in correcting the Evil complained of: It is the Perverseness of the Will, and not the Weakness of the Understanding, that

teaches Men the Evaſions of the Law: Were the Law more explicit, they would only take more Pains to get rid of its Obligations; for the Plainneſs of the Law will do but little in correcting the Malignity of the Will, which yet is the only Thing that ſtands in Need of an Improvement. The Command of loving our Neighbour is ſo far from wanting to be enlarged, that I believe there is no right-good Chriſtian who thinks any Mortal excluded from the Benefit of it, as it now ſtands: To what Purpoſe then ſhould it be enlarged? Were it expreſſed in never ſo general Terms, it might ſtill be miſunderſtood, or perverted, by ſuch as obſtinately refuſe to ſee. Suppoſe the Law conceived in the fulleſt Terms, and that it were ſaid that every Man in the World is to be eſteemed our Neighbour, and has a Right to our Love and Aſſiſtance, and that it is our Duty to do him good; and were this Law, ſo expreſſed, to be made the ſtanding Rule of the Courts of Inquiſition, what would the World be the better for it? For as long as they will maintain that the greateſt Good they can do their Brother is, in order to reform his ſuppoſed Errors in Religion, to whip him and torment him,

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to ſequeſter his Goods and Eſtate, or to deliver him over to the Fire, the more univerſal their Rule is, the worſe it muſt fare with all the World: And, whilſt they have ſuch Notions of doing good, the only Thing to be wiſhed for is, that they might think it their Duty to hate all Mankind.

Since therefore it is impracticable to give Rules and Directions for all poſſible Caſes, and to adjuſt the general Laws of Virtue and Obedience to the great Variety of Circumſtances incident to human Life, without deſtroying the End of all Laws, which are intended for Directions and Rules; but, were they to take in all particular Caſes, would ſoon grow too voluminous to be ſerviceable; there being no Life long enough, no Induſtry ſufficient for ſuch a Study, and no Memory ſtrong enough to retain ſuch a Body of Inſtitutes: Since Reaſon and Judgment would be of no further Uſe in Virtue and Obedience, were Men in all Caſes limited by particular Clauſes and Proviſions; becauſe it would be great Preſumption for Men to exerciſe their Reaſon and their Judgment, in order to govern and direct themſelves, were the Law of God ſo expreſs and particular in all Caſes, as to exclude further Inquiry;

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by which Means the nobleſt Inſtance of Virtue, which is ſhewn in the free Choice that Reaſon makes of what is good and amiable, guided by the general Directions of God's Law, would be oftentimes loſt and impracticable: Since likewiſe the End propoſed to be ſerved by ſuch numerous and particular Laws would not be obtained; but Men would ſtill find Room to cavil at their Duty, and be able to furniſh Pretences to evade it, as is evident from this plain Reaſon, That it is not Want of Knowledge, but of Will to obey, which makes Men wreſt and torture the Law of God: Had they therefore more Light from the moſt expreſs Directions, yet ſtill their Diſinclination to Virtue would be the ſame, and produce the ſame ill Effects; and, conſequently, were the Laws of the Goſpel ever ſo much enlarged, the ſame Difficulties would remain, as long as the ſame Perverſeneſs of Will continues among Men: From theſe Conſiderations, I ſay, it does appear, that the Goſpel is not to be charged with the Doubts and Diſputes which often ariſe upon the Laws and Precepts delivered in it, the Goſpel having all the Perfection requiſite in a Law deſigned for the Government and Inſtruction of rational Creatures;

Creatures; but we muſt look out elſewhere to find the Cauſe that may give us a ſatisfactory Account why Men ſo often and ſo widely differ upon the plaineſt Points of Duty, and whence the Difficulties and Scruples grow, which perplex even the cleareſt Precepts of Chriſtian Morality.

The Text, if carefully attended to, will diſcover to us the Cauſe to which this Evil owes its Growth and Increaſe; and the Parable which our Saviour put forth, inſtead of a direct Anſwer to the Lawyer's Queſtion, will teach us where to ſeek and find the Remedy.

Interpreters are not agreed in the Meaning of the former Part of the Text, *But he, willing to juſtify himſelf, ſaid*; for it does not appear what Occaſion he had for any Juſtification of himſelf: No Accuſation had been brought againſt him; no body had charged him with any Neglect or Contempt of the Law: So far otherwiſe, that our Lord had commended his wiſe Anſwer, and promiſed him Life, if he obeyed the Terms which he himſelf had propoſed: *And he ſaid unto him, Thou haſt anſwered right; This do, and thou ſhalt live:* Upon which immediately follow the Words of the Text, *But he, willing to juſtify*

juſtify himſelf, ſaid unto Jeſus, And who is my Neighbour? Beſides, it does not preſently appear how any Juſtification of himſelf could ariſe out of this Queſtion, or any Anſwer that might be given to it. What Fault did he mean to excuſe by aſking, *Who is my Neighbour?* or, How did his Virtue or Innocence depend upon the Anſwer that ſhould be returned to this Inquiry? Theſe Difficulties, I ſay, have led Interpreters into different Sentiments: But, without examining their Opinions, I ſhall propoſe to you one that ſeems to be the true, becauſe the moſt eaſy and natural Expoſition of the Place.

This Lawyer came to our Lord, and, tempting him, ſaid, *What ſhall I do to inherit eternal Life?* Our Lord returns him to the Law for an Anſwer to his Queſtion, ſaying, *What readeſt thou?* He readily anſwered, That in the Law he found that he was to *love the Lord his God with all his Might, and his Neighbour as himſelf.* This Account our Saviour approves, and ſays unto him, *Thou haſt anſwered right*; and adds, that, if he would practiſe the Law as well as he ſeemed to underſtand it, he was in no Danger: *This do, and thou ſhalt live.* But in this Part, relating to Practice, the Lawyer well

well knew how this Precept in particular, of loving our Neighbours, had been loaded with Exceptions and Limitations by the *Jewiſh* Doctors, and that he had never eſteemed any body to be his Neighbour who was not of the ſame Blood, and who did not profeſs the ſame Religion with himſelf; for which Reaſon he hated many, who, according to the Letter, were his Neighbours, as the *Samaritans* were, who dwelt very near, but were the Averſion of every *Jew*, being eſteemed as the Corruptors of the Faith and true Religion. Since therefore Life eternal depended upon his Obedience to the Law, as he had heard from our Saviour; and ſince whether his Obedience were ſuch as it ought to be depended wholly upon the *Jewiſh* Interpretation of the Law, and could no otherwiſe be maintained than by excluding from the Rights and Privileges of Neighbourhood all who were not of the Stock and Faith of *Iſrael*; in order therefore to his own Juſtification he very properly puts the Queſtion to our Lord, *And who is my Neighbour?* for as this Queſtion ſhould be reſolved, he would be found either to have fulfilled or tranſgreſſed the Commandment. Had our Lord determined in Favour of the *Jewiſh* Interpretation,

pretation, and told him that thoſe only were his Neighbours who were of the ſame Stock and Family, and who worſhipped God in the ſame Manner that he did, the Lawyer had been juſtified in his Practice, and his Obedience might have deſerved Commendation, as well as his prudent Anſwer out of the Law had done before: But, when our Saviour had forced him into a Confeſſion that even the *Samaritan* was his Neighbour, he ſtood condemned by his own Sentence, and by the Example of the *Samaritan* which he had approved, and was ſent away with this ſhort but full Reproof and Admonition; *Go, and do thou likewiſe.*

The Words thus expounded ſhew us upon what Motives Men act, and what it is that prejudices their Minds in the Interpretation of God's Law: They are *willing to juſtify themſelves*; and therefore employ all their Force and Skill to make the Command countenance their Practice, and to ſpeak ſuch Language only as may be conſiſtent with their Inclinations. When our Actions are ſuch as the Law enjoins, when we do what is commanded, and forbear what is forbidden, then is our Obedience perfect. This is ſo plain a Deſcription of Obedience, with

with reſpect to the Law which is to be obeyed, that it cannot be diſputed. A truly virtuous Man endeavours to bend all his Paſſions and Inclinations towards the Command, and to make them entirely ſubmiſſive to it. The Man who loves not his Duty is often uneaſy and reſtleſs under the Pain of Self-Condemnation; and, knowing that all would be well, did but his Actions and the Law agree, he labours to bend the Law towards his Inclinations, that it may juſtify him in all his Doings, and yield him the Pleaſure and Satisfaction of thinking himſelf righteous.

It is no great Wonder, when Men are ſo deeply engaged in any Error either of Practice or Doctrine, that they ſhould labour to reconcile themſelves as far as poſſible with the Commands and Injunctions of God's Law; for, as great as the Pleaſure of Sin is, as large as the Profit of Iniquity often is, they cannot of themſelves ſuſtain the Spirit of a Man againſt the Girds and Laſhes of a guilty Conſcience. Whilſt the Pleaſure is new and in its full Vigour; whilſt the Gain is counting over and treaſuring up, the Mind, perhaps, loſt in the preſent En-

joyment, may want no other Comfort: But the Pleaſures of Vice have their Intermiſſion, and are ſucceeded by cold Damps, which ſeize the Spirits. The Gains of Iniquity are not always pouring themſelves in: When the ill-gotten Wealth is bagged up, there will be ſpare Time more than enough for a Man to aſk himſelf how he got theſe mighty Riches. In theſe Seaſons of Reflection, in theſe Intervals of Thought and Reaſon, the Soul wants other Comforts than ſuch as can ariſe from Pleaſures that are paſt, or from Treaſures that are hidden in the Earth. A Man can never long like a Bargain which he really thinks he ſhall ſuffer for hereafter; and therefore, to quiet and eaſe himſelf, he frames many Devices how to eſcape the Puniſhment he dreads: Being eaſy to be perſuaded, he ſoon convinces himſelf, that the Laws of God have been too rigorouſly expounded, and preſſed too far; that, in Truth, he has not offended againſt the Law of God, but only againſt the cruel Law of the Interpreters, whoſe Pleaſure it is to lay heavy Burdens upon others Shoulders, which themſelves care not to touch with one of their Fingers. By theſe

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Means the eaſy Caſuiſt comes to ſuch a Temper with himſelf, that he can at once enjoy and juſtify his Iniquity.

When the young Man in the Goſpel came to our Lord, inquiring upon what Terms he might inherit eternal Life; our Lord ſet the Commands before him: *Do not commit Adultery: Do not kill: Do not ſteal: Do not bear falſe Witneſs: Honour thy Father and thy Mother.* Thus far all was well: Theſe Terms he willingly accepted; for he had been virtuouſly bred, and had obſerved theſe Things from his Youth; and, having no Guilt to juſtify, he had no Exceptions to make to the Commandments. Our Lord, delighted with his towardly Diſpoſition, would have led him on to greater Perfection: *Yet lackeſt thou,* ſays he, *one Thing: Sell all that thou haſt, and diſtribute unto the Poor, and thou ſhalt have Treaſure in Heaven; and come and follow me.* The young Man, who had not committed Adultery, nor been guilty of Theft, or Diſobedience to his Parent, and therefore had no Fault to find with the former Laws, had, it ſeems, a great Eſtate, and therefore could by no Means digeſt this; *but was exceeding ſorrowful, for he was very rich:* Sorrowful, not becauſe he

was rich, for then he might eaſily have complied, and eaſed his Sorrow; but ſorrowful to find any thing in the Goſpel inconſiſtent with his Riches: How gladly would he have liſtened to any Softenings of this Precept? How would he have adored a Teacher who would have made him a conſiſtent Title to Heaven and his Eſtate? In this Inſtance you ſee the Diſpoſition which makes Men ſtrive with the Law of God, and labour to render it of a Piece with their own Affections: In others we will ſhew you the Practice.

The *Jews* had a Law, commanding that they ſhould honour their Father and their Mother; which implied an Obligation upon Children to ſupport and maintain their indigent Parents; a Precept in itſelf ſo juſt and reaſonable, that it is one of the prime Laws of Nature: But the *Jews*, who were hard-hearted to their own Fleſh and Blood, were uneaſy under this Burden; and yet the Law was plain: And they could not be ſatisfied till they had made the Law comply; and therefore they ſet up Tradition againſt the expreſs Law, and found a Way to diſſolve the uneaſy Obligations: For thus they taught, as our Saviour juſtly reproves them;

If

If a Man ſhall ſay to his Father or Mother, It is a Gift by whatſoever thou mighteſt be profited by me, he ſhall be free: And ye ſuffer him no more to do ought for his Father or Mother, making the Word of God of none Effect through your Tradition. The Law was to be ſupplanted, you ſee, to juſtify the open Breach and Violation of it.

But, to come nearer our own Times, and to ſtill plainer Inſtances: You know in how many Places the Scripture expreſsly forbids us to pay any Worſhip or Service to any Creature; but that we ſhould worſhip and ſerve the Lord, and him only. In this Reſpect God has declared himſelf to be a jealous God, and that he will not give his Honour to another. Of the Ten Commandments, two are ſpent in ſecuring this fundamental Point of true Religion; and the Goſpel has, not only in many, but in all its Parts, confirmed this great Article. Notwithſtanding all this Care, it is well known, that no Point of Doctrine or Practice has been more controverted, even among Chriſtians, than this very Article. Were the Caſe leſs notorious than it is, you would ſay, perhaps, How is this poſſible? How could it enter into any Man's Head ſo to miſunder-

ſtand the Scriptures? What could lead to ſuch Interpretations? That they are ſo interpreted is very plain; and the Account that may be given why they are ſo is as plain alſo. It was not miſunderſtanding or miſinterpreting the Scriptures that led to the Corruptions in Practice: But the corrupt Practices firſt got Poſſeſſion; and Men, *willing to juſtify themſelves*, coined new Interpretations of Scripture, to ſupport their new Practices: And how violent the Inclination to juſtify themſelves is may be eaſily underſtood, when we ſee it beat down ſuch expreſs, ſuch plain, ſuch often-repeated Injunctions of the Word of God. There is not, I believe, one Man, whether Chriſtian, Jew, or Pagan, who has ever heard or read the Goſpel, but thinks that all Image Worſhip, all Creature Worſhip, is abſolutely forbidden in it, thoſe only excepted who are involved in the Practice. Could the *Jews* give themſelves leave to reproach the Goſpel with ſuch Doctrines as ſome Chriſtians pretend to maintain out of it, they would deſire no better Arguments for their rejecting it; nor could they, indeed, have better. To ſerve and to worſhip God in Prayer, and Praiſe, and humble Adoration, are Things hard

hard to be underſtood to none but Scholars: in themſelves they are plain; but the Notions have been ſo refined, in order to juſtify modern Corruptions, that they are become intricate. The Command is plain, that God only is to be worſhipped: How then muſt Room be made for worſhipping any other? In order to this, Worſhip is to be ſplit into many Kinds, and one moſt religiouſly preſerved to God, in Controverſy at leaſt, that the others may the more freely be imparted to the Creature. To this Eagerneſs of juſtifying a corrupt Practice, we owe the many curious Diſtinctions that have been invented to darken and confound the cleareſt Truths of the Goſpel.

DISCOURSE VI.

PART II.

THERE is nothing more complained of, and yet nothing more commonly practiſed, among all Parties, than the perverting the Holy Scriptures, to ſupport and maintain the Opinions and Doctrines, which are the diſtinguiſhing Marks and Characters of different Communions. This holds true of all Sects, in Proportion as they have departed from the genuine Doctrines and Practices of Chriſtianity: For all Sects equally labour to maintain their Tenets, and more or leſs pervert the Scripture, as they have more or leſs gone aſtray from it.

The ſame Diſpoſition is perpetually ſhewing itſelf in private Life. There are not ſo

many ſelf-condemned Sinners in the World as is generally thought; for it is much if he who has long continued in any Sin has not found out ſome Excuſe or ſome Juſtification for his Vice. A Man, who has nothing to judge by but Reaſon and Scripture, would wonder how the Scripture was ever made a Party to ſuch a Defence: But thoſe who are Friends to any Vice have ſomething elſe that guides their Judgment, Self-Love and Intereſt; which are ſuch candid Interpreters, that no Vice need fear being tried by the Scriptures, ſo long as they ſit as Judges.

From what Cauſe it ariſes, that Men thus deal with the Scripture and their own Reaſon, has been already obſerved: Let us now conſider how we may beſt ſecure ourſelves againſt this great Abuſe.

The Words of the Text do not directly lead to this Inquiry, nor will they afford much Light in it: But if we look a little forward, and obſerve by what Means our Lord brought this Diſputer to do Juſtice to the Law of God, and to own even the *Samaritan* to be the *Jew*'s Neighbour, which was a Point conſtantly determined otherwiſe by the *Jewiſh* Doctors, it will teach us how

Men are to be dealt with, by what Art they may be led into the Confeſſion of Truth, and forced to give up the Excuſes and Pretences under which they have long ſheltered themſelves and their Iniquity.

Since therefore what is further to be ſaid in this Argument muſt ariſe from our Lord's Anſwer to this Queſtion put to him in the Text, it will be expedient, in the firſt Place, to ſet our Lord's Anſwer before you in a true Light, which has been obſcured by unneceſſary Difficulties raiſed by Interpreters. In anſwer to the Lawyer's Queſtion, *And who is my Neighbour?* our Lord puts a Caſe to him for his own Judgment: A certain Man, travelling from *Jeruſalem* to *Jericho*, fell among Thieves, loſt all he had, was ſtripped naked, was wounded, and left for dead: A Prieſt paſſed him by in this Condition unregarded; a *Levite* did likewiſe: But a *Samaritan*, happening to travel that Road, had Compaſſion on him; dreſſed his Wounds, ſet him on his own Beaſt, and left him in good Hands, engaging himſelf to anſwer whatever ſhould be expended in the Care or Cure of him. Upon this Caſe our Lord aſks this Queſtion: *Which now of theſe*

theſe three thinkeſt thou was Neighbour to him that fell among the Thieves? And he ſaid, He that ſhewed Mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, Go thou, and do likewiſe. Great Pains have been taken by ſome ſo to adjuſt this Caſe, that it might yield a proper Anſwer to the Lawyer's Queſtion. He aſked, *Who is my Neighbour?* that is, Who am I obliged to love as myſelf? So that our Lord ought to have determined the Extent and Right of Neighbourhood, and from thence deduced the Obligations of Love and Aſſiſtance: Whereas the Caſe ſuppoſes the Love and Aſſiſtance, and from thence infers the Relation of Neighbourhood. The Prieſt and the *Levite* were not Neighbours, becauſe they did not aſſiſt the wounded Man: The *Samaritan* was his Neighbour, becauſe he ſhewed Kindneſs to him. And if this be ſo, that no Man is our Neighbour till we have either ſhewed or received Kindneſs from him, we cannot then, from the Right of Neighbourhood, infer the Obligations of Love; but muſt determine, from the mutual Exerciſe of Love, the Notion and Extent of Neighbourhood: And, if this be the Caſe, no Man can offend againſt the Law of loving

loving his Neighbour; for, if none are our Neighbours but thoſe whom we love, then every Man certainly loves his Neighbours.

But if we conſider the Caſe fairly, and view it in its due Light, this ſuppoſed Difficulty will vaniſh. The Queſtion was aſked by the Lawyer out of a Deſire to juſtify himſelf: He had learned to call no Man Neighbour who was not of the ſame Stock and Religion with himſelf: *Samaritans* he expreſsly hated, and juſtified his Hatred, becauſe they were Deſerters from the true Worſhip, and Deſpiſers of the Temple which was in *Jeruſalem*. This great Error our Lord was to wreſt from him, which was not to be done by batteling his Prejudices, and arguing upon the true Senſe and Meaning of the Law: The Lawyer, not unaccuſtomed to ſuch Exerciſe, would have held up the Diſpute, and ſtood reſolute againſt any ſuch Convictions: Our Saviour therefore puts him a Caſe, and ſtates it ſo, that his Prejudices were all ſhut out, and could have no Influence in the Determination: A *Jew* therefore is put into the Place of Diſtreſs: *A certain Man went down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell among Thieves.* Here could be no Exception taken againſt the

the Perſon. Had the *Samaritan* been placed in the ſame Caſe, and his Calamities painted in the moſt moving Colours, he would have found no Pity from the *Jew*, who would have excepted to his Religion, and thought himſelf very much in the Right to have been an Enemy to the Enemy of God: But when one of his Nation was repreſented in Miſery, he ſaw Reaſon in every thing that was done for his Relief. A Prieſt and a *Levite* are ſaid to paſs by and neglect him: Theſe Perſons ſtood in all thoſe Relations to the Diſtreſſed, which the Lawyer owned to be the juſt Bonds and Tyes of Neighbourhood: They were of his Kindred, and they met at the ſame Altar to worſhip the ſame God: He could not therefore but condemn their Want of Bowels to their Brother. A *Samaritan* is repreſented as paſſing by, and ſhewing the greateſt Tenderneſs and Compaſſion to the poor *Jew*: This could not but be approved: Even the Prejudice of the Lawyer carried him in theſe Circumſtances to a right Judgment; for, knowing how inveterately the *Jew* hated the *Samaritan*, he could not but the more admire and approve the *Samaritan*'s Kindneſs to the *Jew*. Upon this Caſe our Lord puts him to determine which

which was Neighbour to the Man in Diſtreſs; or, which is the ſame Thing, which of the three acted moſt agreeably to the Law of God, commanding that we ſhould *love our Neighbour as ourſelf:* The Lawyer anſwers, *He that ſhewed Mercy*; confeſſing that the *Samaritan* had fulfilled the Law; which was condemning the *Jewiſh* Expoſition, and his own Prejudices: For if a *Jew* was rightly forbidden to ſhew Kindneſs to a *Samaritan*, becauſe of the Difference in Religion between them, the ſame Reaſon made it unlawful for a *Samaritan* to aſſiſt a *Jew*. Our Saviour approves his Judgment, and bids him only apply it to himſelf, *Go thou, and do likewiſe*; that is, Since you commend the *Samaritan* for acting like a Neighbour to the *Jew*, do you learn to act like a Neighbour to the *Samaritan*: For this is the true Force of the Word *likewiſe*. For a *Jew* to be kind to a *Jew* only, is not to do like the good *Samaritan*, who was kind, not to a *Samaritan* only, but to a *Jew* alſo. And thus you ſee the Caſe led to a full Determination of the Queſtion propoſed, and ſhewed that no Reſtrictions were to be laid upon the Law of God; that even thoſe whom he accounted as his worſt Enemies, the very

Samaritans,

Samaritans, were entitled to the Benefit of it, and ought to be treated with the Love and Kindneſs which is due to our Neighbours.

From our Lord's Conduct in this Caſe, we may learn how to apply to the Paſſions and Prejudices of Mankind, and by what Art Truth is beſt and moſt ſucceſsfully introduced, where Error has been long in Poſſeſſion. Were it a Defect in our Reaſon and Underſtanding that made us diſagree, and judge and act differently, in Caſes where we have one and the ſame Rule to go by, no human Application could reach the Diſtemper; ſince it is not in our Power to enlarge the Faculties which are bounded by God and Nature: But our Reaſon and our Underſtanding are not in Fault; they want only to be ſet free, and to be delivered from the Bondage of Paſſion and Prejudice, to judge rightly in Caſes of Morality and natural Juſtice. If you look into the World, you will ſee Men as much diſtinguiſhed by their Vices, as by the Features of their Faces. Few Men have many reigning Vices at once: Covetouſneſs, well planted in the Mind, will ſtarve out all other Paſſions; it will ſuffer hardly any other Vice to live by it. The ſame may be obſerved of Luxury and

and Intemperance, and of Lewdneſs, and of Ambition: Where any of them flouriſh, they take up the whole Man: Other Vices are admitted only accidentally, and at ſpare Hours, or as they may be ſubſervient to the main Inclination. I obſerve this, becauſe, upon Examination, you will find that Men's Reaſon and Judgment fail in the very ſame Proportion that Vice and Paſſion prevail.

Did Men judge perverſely in all Caſes alike, we ſhould not eaſily aſſign any other Cauſe but Want of Judgment and Reaſon; ſince nothing leſs would account for the total Abſence and Defect of it: But when we find Men to have Reaſon in moſt Caſes, and to be dark only in ſome few; when we ſee them exerciſing their Minds freely and impartially, generally ſpeaking, but in ſome few Inſtances obſtinately bent to hug and to maintain a Lye; it puts us to a neceſſary Inquiry to ſearch out ſome other Cauſe, that may anſwer this odd Appearance, and account for a Man's Want of Reaſon and Judgement in one or two Inſtances, who acts and judges as reaſonably as his Neighbours in all others. Now, if from the Experience of human Life you find that a Man's Reaſon and his Virtue forſake him in the ſame

Inſtances; that he judges perverſely in the ſame Caſes in which he acts perverſely, and remarkably ſo in them only; this will teach you what it is that miſguides, or, rather, enſlaves the Mind, and by what Methods the Freedom and Liberty of Reaſon may be reſtored. If the covetous Man rightly condemns all Vice, and perverſely defends his own: If the voluptuous Man abhors Covetouſneſs, Fraud, and Deceit, whilſt he looks on his own Pleaſures as innocent and harmleſs, and can devoutly bleſs himſelf that he is no Extortioner, that he does not devour the Widow's Houſe, and yet thinks himſelf under no great Condemnation for ſeducing the Widow's Daughter, which is her richeſt Treaſure: If the ambitious Man equally and juſtly condemns both, and yet ſees no Harm, no Reaſon to be diſpleaſed with himſelf, for all the wild Havock which his Ambition makes in the World: If theſe Things, I ſay, are ſo, and that they are ſo daily Experience witneſſeth, it is evident what Biaſs influences the Judgment of Men, when they obſtinately maintain and defend the Cauſe of Error or of Vice. It is *Self* that always lies at the Bottom: It is not ſo much the Vice, as *Self* that is to be defended;

fended; and if you can but ſeparate *Self* from the Vice, the Vice will ſoon fall under the common Sentence of Reaſon, and be left to be condemned with its Fellows.

By this honeſt, this holy Art, our Lord convinced the Lawyer who put the Queſtion of the Text to him. He aſked the Queſtion, intending that none ſhould be admitted into the Number of his Neighbours who were not nearly allied to him; of the ſame Nation at leaſt. Our Saviour ſtates a Caſe to him, and puts it ſo, that his Prejudices were all thrown out and ſilenced. The Conſequence was, that he who wanted to exclude almoſt all Mankind from a Right to his good Offices, in a few Minutes owns even the *Samaritan*, his moſt hated Enemy, to be the *Jew*'s Neighbour; and, by owning and accepting the *Samaritan*'s good Offices done to the *Jew* under the Relation of a Neighbour, he confeſſed the *Samaritan*'s Right, in that Relation, to expect and receive the good Offices of the *Jew*.

By the ſame Method the Prophet *Nathan* made *David*, in the very Heighth of Sin and Extravagance, give Sentence upon himſelf and his Iniquity. The wretched King had taken the Wife of *Uriah* to his Bed, and

had ſlain the Huſband by the Sword of the Children of *Ammon*. When he received the Meſſage of *Uriah*'s Death, which ought to have filled him with Horror and Confuſion, he ſent this Comfort to the Captain of the Hoſt, which, no Doubt, his falſe Heart had firſt adminiſtered to himſelf; *Let not this Thing diſpleaſe thee, for the Sword devoureth one as well as another:* And ſo ſatisfied he was with his Reaſoning upon this Accident of War, as he was willing to eſteem it, that he ſoon ſent for the unfortunate brave Man's Widow, and ſhe became his Wife. In this State of Security and Enjoyment the Prophet *Nathan* comes to him: Had he openly taxed him with the Murder, perhaps the King had juſtified himſelf, and ſaid to the Prophet, as he did to his Captain, *The Sword devoureth one as well as another*; or perhaps the Prophet had been rebuked for his ſawcy Intruſion, and been forced to fly the Preſence of the angry King: But the Prophet came with a Complaint to the King of a great Oppreſſion, which a very rich Man had been guilty of towards a very poor one. *David* was ready to hear and redreſs ſuch Wrong; for this Caſe ſtirred no Prejudices; himſelf ſeemed unconcerned in it. The Prophet's

Caſe

Caſe was this: A rich Man had a Friend come to viſit him; and for his Entertainment he ſent and killed a poor Neighbour's ſolitary Ewe Lamb, which had been bred tame among his Children, and was a great Fondling, though he had large Flocks of his own, and many Herds, which would have yielded him any Entertainment for his Friend; but he ſpared his own numerous Flocks, and robbed his poor Neighbour of his one Lamb, to feaſt his Friend. The Caſe was hard in itſelf, and the Prophet had repreſented it with all the moving and tender Circumſtances that could be thought on. *David*, fired at ſuch flagrant Injuſtice and Oppreſſion, ſwore, *As the Lord liveth, the Man that hath done this Thing ſhall ſurely die.* When the King had paſſed Sentence, then the Prophet opened the Secret, and ſaid, *Thou art the Man:* The Ewe Lamb was the Wife of *Uriah*, whom thou haſt taken from her Huſband, though thou hadſt Wives and Concubines in Abundance: Thou haſt not only robbed the poor Man of his one Ewe Lamb, but thou haſt added Murder to thine Oppreſſion; thou haſt killed the poor Man alſo; thou haſt ſlain *Uriah* with the Sword of the Children of *Ammon.* The

King, upon this Charge, had no Retreat left to his Juſtification: He that had declared the Man ſhould die who had killed his poor Neighbour's Lamb, could not juſtify himſelf who had killed his poor Neighbour, that he might the more eaſily enjoy his Wife; and therefore he had nothing left but this plain Confeſſion, *I have ſinned againſt the Lord.*

Thus our Saviour alſo, under the Parable of an Houſeholder and his Vineyard, made the *Jews* bear witneſs to the Juſtice of God, in rejecting their Nation from being his People. When he had repreſented how ill the Huſbandmen treated the Lord of the Vineyard; how they abuſed his Servants and deſtroyed his Son; even the *Jews* could give righteous Sentence in their own Caſe, veiled under theſe Figures, and adjudge the wicked Huſbandmen to Deſtruction, and the Vineyard to be let to better Tenants.

It is no hard Matter to get Truth out of Men, if you can once get beyond their Prejudices, and ſeparate the Truth from all perſonal Views and Intereſts; for Reaſon is ſufficiently clear, where it is not clouded and obſcured by Paſſion and Affection: The Heathen Moraliſts ſeem to be ſenſible of this, when they cloath the moſt beneficial Inſtructions

Inſtructions in the Dreſs of Fable: The only Reaſon of which is, that no Man is concerned in the Succeſs of a Fable, and therefore will judge impartially; which, if the Inſtruction were brought home to him, and applied to his own Caſe, he would not perhaps do. A paſſionate Man will be reſtrained from his Revenge by no prudential Conſiderations; he deſpiſes them all; they are all the Leſſons of Cowardice, and the Tokens of a mean Spirit: and yet he never reads the Fable of an Horſe, who, to revenge himſelf, called in a Man's Aſſiſtance, and taught him how to mount, from which Time he loſt all Liberty, and has been a Slave ever ſince, but he laughs at the Horſe's Folly, and his impotent Deſire of Revenge.

The Conſequences from what has been ſaid are plain, and I ſhall but juſt touch them.

Firſt, It is evident that the true Art of convincing any Man of his Error is to throw him as much as poſſible out of the Caſe; for, the leſs a Man is concerned himſelf, the better he judges. You are not to ſtir and fret his Prejudices, but to decline them; not to reproach him with the Error you con-

demn, but to place the Error at a ſufficient Diſtance from him, that he may have a true Light to view it in.

Secondly, In private Life, it is plain from hence, that Innocence is the only true Preſervative of Reaſon and Judgment: Guilt will diſpoſe you to ſeek Excuſes and Subterfuges, and miſlead you in your Opinion of yourſelf and your Duty. When once you find yourſelf labouring to juſtify your Actions, and ſearching for Expoſitions that may ſuit your Inclinations, from that Moment you may date your Loſs of Freedom.

Thirdly, If you find yourſelf involved in the Caſe you are to judge of, inſtead of ſeeking for new Reaſons and Arguments to form your Opinion by, you had much better look back, and reflect what Senſe you had of this Matter before the Cauſe was your own; for it is ten to one but that Judgment was much more free and impartial than any you will make now: Or conſider, if the Caſe admits it, what is the Senſe of the ſober and virtuous Part of the World; you may more ſafely truſt them than yourſelf, where your Paſſions are concerned: At leaſt ſuppoſe your Enemy in the ſame Circumſtances with yourſelf, and doing what you find

find yourſelf inclined to do, and conſider what Judgment you ſhould make of him, and ſo judge of yourſelf: By theſe Means perhaps we may preſerve ourſelves from the fatal Influences which Vice and Paſſion have over the Reaſon and Underſtanding of Mankind.

DISCOURSE VII.

ROMANS xiv. 16.

Let not then your Good be evil ſpoken of.

IN deſcribing the Condition of our Chriſtian Warfare, St. *Peter* tells us, *If, when ye do well, and ſuffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God:* To this, ſays he, you are called by the Example of Chriſt, who ſuffered Reproaches willingly, and, *when he was reviled, reviled not again.* This is a Duty, in which one would think there ſhould be no Danger of any Man's over-acting his Part. Reproach and Contempt are not ſuch deſirable Riches, that we need be warned againſt their Temptations, or cautioned leſt we too earneſtly purſue after them. We are apt enough to ſhrink

ſhrink at the Approach of Calumny, and to invent plauſible Excuſes for the Neglect of a Duty, which performed would expoſe us to Envy or Ill-will. What then means the Apoſtle by this Exhortation, *Let not your Good be evil ſpoken of?* Are we called by Chriſt to ſuffer Revilings and Reproaches? and, are we called by his Apoſtle to fly from them and avoid them? Our Saviour ſeems to ſpeak other Language to us in his Sermon on the Mount: *Bleſſed are ye when Men ſhall revile you and perſecute you:* And, if it be our Happineſs to be reviled, how is it our Duty to take care not to be evil ſpoken of for our Good?

But ſuppoſe, however, that it is no Way inconſiſtent with our Chriſtian Duty to avoid the Calumny and Reproach of the World; yet ſtill is it in our Power to ſtop the Mouth of Malice and Wickedneſs? When we do our Duty, can we help it if others will ſpeak Evil of our Good? Why are not they rather exhorted not to ſpeak Evil of our Good, than we not to let our Good be evil ſpoken of? It is not in our Power to govern other People's Tongues: Is it not enough therefore that the Thing we do is good, but muſt it likewiſe lie upon us to ſecure

ſecure our Good from the Attempts of Malice and Envy? Is it not ſufficient that we ſuffer patiently under the Malice of Wickedneſs, but muſt we partake in the Guilt of it too; and ſhall it be imputed to us as a Crime, that we let our Good be evil ſpoken of?

Such Reaſonings as theſe perhaps the Text may ſuggeſt at firſt hearing; but, when maturely conſidered, it will afford excellent Inſtruction for our Conduct in the Purſuit of thoſe Things which are in themſelves truly good and praiſe-worthy: It will teach us not only how to be good in ourſelves, but likewiſe how to be uſeful in the World, by exerciſing a truly Chriſtian Prudence and Addreſs in promoting the Intereſt of Virtue and Religion.

To court Oppreſſion and Perſecution, to invite the World to miſuſe us for the Sake of our Profeſſion, is far from being a Duty to which the Goſpel has called us. It is neither for the Intereſt of our Religion, nor the Glory of our Maſter, that we ſhould voluntarily expoſe either ourſelves or our Doctrine to the Hatred and Contempt of the World: In both Caſes our Saviour has given other Directions; *Give not*, ſays he, *that which*

which is holy unto the Dogs; neither caſt ye your Pearl before Swine, leſt they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you, Matt. vii. 6. And when he ſent his Diſciples forth to preach, he expreſly commanded them to *beware of Men*; not only allowing, but requiring them to have a Regard to their own Safety, and cautiouſly to ſhift the Dangers to which they were neceſſarily to be expoſed.

This may ſatisfy us of the Lawfulneſs and Expediency of guarding againſt the Dangers that may attend the Practice and Profeſſion of Religion in an evil World, and clear our Way to the underſtanding the Extent and Meaning of the Apoſtle's Advice, *Let not your Good be evil ſpoken of.*

The Rule is general, and extends itſelf to all Parts of our Chriſtian Converſation: It ſtands applied indeed by the Apoſtle to a particular Caſe, which was Matter of Controverſy in the Church of *Rome* at the Time this Letter was written to them: But as the Rule does not ariſe out of the particular Circumſtances of that Caſe, there will be no Neceſſity of conſidering it with Reference to the Diſpute which the Apoſtle had in his View; but we may deduce it from the

general Principles of Chriſtian Prudence and Charity in which it is founded. And, that we may proceed clearly to the Point we aim at, I ſhall,

Firſt, Inquire what we are to underſtand the Apoſtle to mean by *our Good.*

Secondly, Endeavour to ſhew that *our Good* is often expoſed to be *evil ſpoken of* through our own Indiſcretion; and, conſequently, that it is often in our own Power to prevent it: From whence,

In the laſt Place, will appear the Reaſonableneſs of the Duty enjoined us in the Text.

Firſt, We are to inquire what we are to underſtand the Apoſtle to mean by *our Good.* And here we may meet with different Opinions: Some, by *our Good,* underſtand our Religion, which is indeed every Chriſtian's chief Good; and according to this Senſe of the Words the Apoſtle muſt be underſtood to exhort us to have a Regard to the Honour of the Goſpel in all our Actions, to adminiſter no Occaſion to the Enemies of our Religion either to deride or deſpiſe our holy Calling. And thus the Text amounts to an Argument, or Exhortation, to move us to a ſimplicity of Manners and an inoffenſive Behaviour, for Fear leſt we bring a Reproach upon

upon our Profeſſion. But the Apoſtle ſeems to aim at ſomething further: His Buſineſs here is not to deter us from the Practice of Evil, but to direct us in the Uſe and Practice of that which is good, that our Virtue may be without Offence, and ſecured from Calumny and Reproach: And *our Good*, mentioned in the Text, is not the Topic from which the Apoſtle draws an Argument or Exhortation, but is the Subject Matter concerning which he is giving Directions. According to this Interpretation of the Words, the Text may be thus paraphraſed; Be not content with merely doing that which is in itſelf good and commendable, but look forward to the Conſequences which are likely to attend it, and endeavour to prevent any Miſchief that may grow out of it to yourſelf or others, that your Good may be inoffenſive and irreproachable. In this Senſe it is that I propoſe to conſider the Text; and ſhall now proceed,

Secondly, To ſhew, that our good is often expoſed to be evil ſpoken of through our own Indiſcretion; and, conſequently, that it is often in our own Power to prevent it.

There

There is no ſuch Thing as being truly good and virtuous till we are got to be above the Temptations of the World, and free from the Servitude of courting its Opinion: But then it is too common a Miſtake for Men to think, that to be above the Temptations of the World is the ſame Thing as to deſpiſe the World and all that belong to it: And hence it is that Virtue often contracts ſuch a Moroſeneſs, and becomes ſo untractable, that it can be of no public Uſe or Benefit, but is confined to its own Cell, the poor honeſt Heart that poſſeſſes it. Nor is this the only Inconvenience: The Cauſe of Virtue itſelf often ſuffers by the Zeal and Indiſcretion of ſuch miſtaken Votaries: They look with Diſdain upon all the prudent Methods by which Goodneſs may be advanced, and cenſure them as the Effects of worldly Wiſdom and Cunning; and, provided the Thing they do be in itſelf juſtifiable, they are above conſidering the Conſequences that may attend it: Nay, the greater the Inconveniencies are which threaten them, the more eagerly they embrace them, eſteeming it to be the moſt generous Part of Virtue to ſuffer for that which is good. This Sort of inflexible Goodneſs naturally runs out into

Diſdain and Averſion, and makes Men value themſelves more for hating a Knave than they would do for reforming him, and to look upon it as an higher Degree of Virtue to reproach Men with their Vices than it is to correct and amend them.

What Succeſs muſt attend this Method of propagating Virtue and Religion may be ſoon known, by conſidering the Temper and Diſpoſition of Mankind. To vex and exaſperate Men can ſerve only to make them ſtubborn in their Vices and obſtinate in their Opinions; and all that is got by it is to expoſe the Good you do to reproach, and to give the Enemies of Religion occaſion to blaſpheme. Zeal is the nobleſt Grace, when duly tempered with Charity and Prudence, and, whilſt it continues under their Influence, it produces the nobleſt Fruit; but, when it breaks looſe from theſe Reſtraints, it grows wild and extravagant, and becomes the Grief of wiſe Men, and the Sport and Laughter of Fools.

This is one Way by which Men expoſe their Good to be evil ſpoken of. Their Miſtake lies in not rightly diſtinguiſhing between a ſervile Compliance with the World, and a prudent Behaviour towards it; and yet there is as much Difference between them as between

between Virtue and Vice: One is the Way which Men who ſacrifice Honour and Conſcience to their Intereſt make uſe of: The other is the Method which wiſe and good Men take to recommend the Practice of Virtue and Religion. And what a wide Difference is this? In the firſt Caſe, to comply with the World, you muſt be like it, you muſt conform yourſelf to it: In the other, you treat the World civilly, that it may the more eaſily become like you; that you may gain upon it, and inſtill the Principles of Virtue, which may be infuſed by gentle Degrees, but cannot be obtruded by Noiſe and Violence.

Thoſe who are of too ſtiff a Virtue to court the World into a Compliance with that which is good, may do well to conſider how our Apoſtle is to be juſtified in the Character he has given us of himſelf: *Though I be free from all Men, yet have I made myſelf Servant unto all, that I might gain the more: Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law, as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law; to them that are without Law, as without Law, (being not without the Law to God, but under the Law to Chriſt) that I might gain them that are*

without Law; to the Weak became I as weak, that I might gain the Weak: I am made all Things to all Men, that I might by all Means ſave ſome, 1 Cor. ix. 19, *&c.* Into what a Variety of Shapes did he turn himſelf, to gain upon the Affections of Men, that he might the more eaſily gain Admiſſion for the Goſpel of Chriſt? Had he fallen directly upon their Infirmities and Miſtakes, he might have fired their Minds, and ſtopped their Ears to his Inſtruction. He knew that Patience and gentle Teaching would by Degrees get the Maſtery of their Errors, and lead them, without Tumult or Oppoſition, to the Acknowledgment of the Truth; that their Prejudices would wear out; and, as the Light of the Goſpel began to dawn in their Hearts, their Affections would take a new Turn of themſelves, which at preſent were not to be ſtemmed. He uſed the Art of a ſkilful Pilot, who chuſes to coaſt it along the Shore when the Tide runs too high in the Channel, as knowing it to be not only the ſafeſt, but the ſhorteſt Way to the Point he makes.

Yet thus to court the Affections of Men is by many thought below the Dignity of Religion: But where does this Indignity lie?

Ought

Ought not Men to be made in love with Virtue and Religion? Yes, you will ſay: And how is that to be done? Muſt it not be by engaging their Affections in the Cauſe of Religion? Undoubtedly it muſt: And is it then neceſſary to engage Men's Affections in the Cauſe of Religion? And is it yet an unworthy Attempt to endeavour to engage them? How can theſe Things be made to agree? But, if it muſt be allowed that it is neceſſary to apply to Men's Affections in the Cauſe of Virtue and Religion, it will ſhew the Reaſonableneſs of the Apoſtle's Advice in the Text, and the Neceſſity there is of having Recourſe to Chriſtian Prudence and Wiſdom to direct us in the Practice even of that which is good: For all Things have not the ſame Appearance to all Men; nay, the ſame Object appears differently to the ſame Man, as it is expoſed in different Lights; which holds as true with reſpect to the Eyes of the Mind as of the Body: And therefore it lies upon us to guard againſt any ill Impreſſions that may be made upon others by the Good we do.

This Care not to offend is the Foundation of Civility and Good-breeding in common Life, and will likewiſe be productive of

mutual Love and Condeſcenſion in Religion: It will teach us to be tender of each other's Infirmities, and to avoid the Occaſions of giving Offence, which Men who have not this Care upon their Minds rather labour to ſeek and to improve. Let us but view the Difference there will be in one Chriſtian Grace, when attended with this Care, and when not: Let the Grace be Zeal, which is in itſelf, without Doubt, an excellent Gift; but, where Men have no Regard how far they truſt or offend others, how raſh and intemperate does it grow, in reproaching not only the Vices, but the Follies and Weakneſſes of Mankind; how eaſily does it degenerate into Cenſoriouſneſs, and tranſport Men beyond all Bounds of Charity and Diſcretion? The Conſequence is, that it is immediately ſurrounded with Enemies of its own raiſing, and ſuffers under the Names of Fury and Uncharitableneſs. But, on the other Side, where it is found in Company with Prudence, and joined with a Care not to offend, it is a gentle and heavenly Flame, which warms without ſcorching: It falls upon its right Object, the Honour of God, and the Good of Men, and confines itſelf to ſuch Methods only as may beſt ſerve to promote

promote both: It will therefore never run into any Indecencies of Paſſion, which are unbecoming the Cauſe it maintains; nor will it provoke and exaſperate thoſe whom it labours to reform, as knowing what little Benefit Men can receive by being ill-treated. Thus will it ſecure itſelf from being evil ſpoken of, and appear with Advantage in the Eyes of all that behold it. But, farther,

Some there are who have ſo little Regard to the ſecuring their Good from being evil ſpoken of, that their Zeal for Good ariſes even from Envy and Strife. This Spirit is ſtill in being; and it is no uncommon Thing for Men to be ſpitefully good, and to delight in the Opportunities of exaſperating others who differ from them: Men often fall upon Subjects for no other Reaſon but becauſe they know how diſagreeable they are to ſome of the Company; and, to juſtify themſelves, they ſay, that Men ought not to be aſhamed when they are in the Right, or afraid of owning the Truth; which are two very good Reaſons very ſadly applied; for Men ought to be aſhamed of making this Uſe of Truth, which is merely inſulting the Prejudices of Mankind, and not correcting them. It is a very unnatural Effect

of Love for the Truth, to labour to make others hate it; and yet what elſe can be expected from theſe Meaſures? To make a Reproach of the Truth, and to upbraid Men with it, is to place it in ſuch a Light before them, that it muſt neceſſarily appear to them a frightful Object. It is certain that Men are never to be complimented at the Expence of Truth or Religion; nor can too hard a Name be given to the mean Spirit that makes Men always join in the Opinion of their Company; nor are the Opportunities, which Converſation affords, of juſtifying ourſelves and our Opinions from the Miſapprehenſions of others, to be neglected. It is mightily for the Advancement of Peace and Truth that Men ſhould rightly underſtand each other; and this is one of the beſt Ends that is ſerved by Converſation; and therefore there is the greater Miſchief in perverting it, and uſing it as an Opportunity of revenging ourſelves: The Conſequence of it is very plain; it makes Men ſeldom care to converſe with any but thoſe of their own Opinion; which is the Way to eſtabliſh Error, and to propagate it for ever. There is a Difference between beating a Man with the Truth, and endeavouring to convince him

of

of it; and between raiſing his Paſſions to oppoſe it, and preparing them to receive it. This is the true End of Converſation, though the other is too often the Uſe of it; and the Miſchief is ſufficiently great, if we only conſider what a Stubbornneſs in Opinion Men contract by being ſo unſeaſonably provoked.

But there is ſtill a further Miſchief: When Men truly labour to promote Truth, and recommend it to others, they always place it in its beſt Light, and take care to obviate the Miſapprehenſions of thoſe they deal with; But where they enter into a Queſtion merely for Oppoſition ſake, or for the Pleaſure of expoſing ſomebody elſe, they care not how little he underſtands the Truth, or how groſsly he miſtakes; for, the more Violence and Paſſion he ſhews againſt it, the greater the Entertainment; and therefore, inſtead of obviating his Doubts, Stumbling-Blocks are laid in his Way, and the Thing is painted induſtriouſly in ſuch Colours as are known to be moſt offenſive to him: And what is the Conſequence? He for ever takes his Meaſure of your Opinion from this Repreſentation of it, and goes away perſuaded that you could not anſwer the Objections,

jections, which you would not: You have your Entertainment for the preſent, and he his Error, it is probable, for ever. And is not this wilfully to expoſe our Good to be evil ſpoken of, and, for the ſake of an ill-natured Diverſion, to ſacrifice the Intereſt of Truth and Religion?

The ſame Effect is often ſeen to proceed from a Mixture of Zeal and Ignorance: In this Caſe Men often judge it abſolutely neceſſary to do or ſay the Things they approve, when they are before thoſe who they know do not approve them: They look upon it to be aſſerting the Truth; and to do otherwiſe, in their Opinion, is deſerting it. This was ſomething of the Caſe which the Apoſtle had before him when he wrote the Words of the Text. The Queſtion in the Church of *Rome* was, concerning the lawful or unlawful Uſe of Meats forbidden in the Law of *Moſes:* Thoſe who held it lawful to uſe them were never more zealous of their Liberty, or more certain to make uſe of it, than when they met at Table with thoſe of another Opinion: This gave Riſe to many Scandals and Offences. The Apoſtle, who allowed the Uſe of all Meats indifferently, diſapproved this perverſe uncharitable

Uſe

Uſe of them; and, among many other Reaſons, gave this as one, *Let not your Good be evil ſpoken of.* But to proceed:

Sometimes Men expoſe their Good to be evil ſpoken of out of pure Pride and Haughtineſs of Temper: This is the Caſe when Men have ſuch a Contempt for the World, as not to think it worth their while to guard againſt the Miſapprehenſions of thoſe about them. They reckon it below their Dignity to render any Account of what they do, and a Mark of Guilt to deſcend ſo low as to juſtify their Actions. But ſurely, if we eſtimate the Thing fairly, it is betraying of that which is good to Reproach, and laying of Stumbling-Blocks in the Way of the Blind. The very Reaſon why you deſpiſe the World, and diſdain to give any Account to it of what you do, becauſe the World is weak and captious, and below a wiſe Man's Notice, is the Reaſon why you ought to endeavour to ſatisfy it. This Rule of the Apoſtle's has its Riſe from the Weakneſs of Men; and the very End of it is to direct us how to walk with reſpect to thoſe who are weak, and unable to judge of Things ſo perfectly as we do. Do but read the firſt Verſe of the next Chapter, in which the Apoſtle ſums up the

Advice he had given, and you will ſee that the Apoſtle lays his Foundation in the known or ſuppoſed Weakneſs of Men: *We then*, ſays he, *that are ſtrong, ought to bear the Infirmities of the Weak, and not to pleaſe ourſelves:* And when he adviſes us not to let our Good be evil ſpoken of, what elſe is it but to adviſe us to guard againſt the Weakneſs and Miſapprehenſions of Men? He knew ſurely that Good could not be liable to be evil ſpoken of, but by being miſunderſtood; and therefore he can mean nothing elſe, in this Charge, but that we ſhould condeſcend to the Weakneſs of others, and keep our Good out of the Way of being miſunderſtood by them.

How much below a wiſe Man you may think this Conduct, I cannot ſay; but I am ſure it is not below a good Man, who will think nothing below him that tends to the Honour and Advancement of Virtue; and nothing more does ſo than to juſtify Virtue and Goodneſs in the Eyes of the World. Things are capable of very different Conſtructions; and all Men cannot equally judge of the Conſequences and Tendencies of Opinions and Actions; and therefore it is a Duty owing to yourſelf, your Neighbour, and the

Truth, to fence your Actions and Principles againſt the Miſapprehenſions of weak Minds. Your own Reputation, your Neighbours' Satisfaction, and the Honour of Truth, are equally concerned, and equally demand this Juſtice at your Hands.

Nor is any Man, how great ſoever he is, above rendering an Account of himſelf to the World. It is not true Magnanimity or Greatneſs of Soul that makes Men averſe to it, but a narrow-ſpirited Inſolence and Pride that poſſeſſes them, and teaches them to place their Glory not ſo much in the Worthineſs of their Actions, as in deſpiſing and contemning every body elſe. A generous Virtue is open and free, harbours no ill Deſigns, and therefore fears no Diſcovery; and never appears more truly glorious than when it is moſt truly underſtood: It loves the Light, becauſe its Deeds are good; and is always ready to render an Account of itſelf, becauſe it can always render a good one. Were this Openneſs and Plainneſs more practiſed in the World, perhaps it might prevent a great deal of that Hatred and Animoſity, which are founded in mutual Jealouſies and Suſpicions: I imagine this would be the Conſequence, becauſe I verily

believe

believe that few Men intend half the Miſchief that they are ſuſpected of.

There are other Inſtances to be given in which Men expoſe their Good to be evil ſpoken of: When a Man ſacrifices Truth and Honour to Intereſt, and baſely deſerts the Cauſe which he approves, Truth itſelf often ſuffers, and others think there was but little in the Profeſſion, ſince ſo little appears in Action: But in this, and the like Caſes, Men may be more properly ſaid to expoſe themſelves to be evil ſpoken of than their Good; for the World is generally ſo quick-ſighted as to know that ſuch Treachery is to be charged not upon the Cauſe, but the Man: Theſe Inſtances therefore do not ſo immediately belong to the preſent Subject. I proceed now to the laſt Particular, which is to ſhew,

Thirdly, That as it is often in our Power to prevent our Good from being evil ſpoken of, ſo in many Caſes it is our Duty.

This Duty may, I think, be deduced from theſe Principles; the Honour of God and of Truth, the Charity that is owing to our Brethren, and the Juſtice that is due to Ourſelves.

The

The Honour of God is chiefly conſulted by reconciling Men's Minds to the Love of Virtue and Religion, by removing their Prejudices, and gently drawing their Affections to the Cauſe of Goodneſs: This is the moſt ſubſtantial Honour we can pay our Maker, to *exalt his Name among the People, and teach every Tongue to confeſs his Truth.* It is certain Men can never love the Thing they ſpeak evil of; and therefore the firſt Step to make Men in love with Virtue, is to remove out of their Way all poſſible Offences, to do nothing, not even that which is good, out of Contention, which is the Way to elevate the Paſſions, and depreſs the Judgement, and blind Men from ſeeing and acknowledging the Truth. In all human Actions the Paſſions and Affections will have a Share; and therefore it is neceſſary to court them by all fair Means even in the Cauſe of Virtue: And what honeſter Method can be taken, than to ſecure our Good from being evil ſpoken of? Good ought not to be evil ſpoken of; and therefore ought not to be expoſed to the Hazard of it without Neceſſity. An indiſcreet good Man often does a great deal of Miſchief in the World, and raiſes an Oppoſition to the Good

Good which he meant to recommend: Our Saviour therefore, as a neceſſary Qualification for preaching the Goſpel, exhorts his Diſciples to be *wiſe as Serpents, and innocent as Doves.* Innocence is of abſolute Neceſſity in a Preacher of Righteouſneſs: Some Degree of Wiſdom cannot well be ſpared: The greater the Degree is, the more effectually will it ſecure his Innocence, and recommend it to the Imitation of the World. A great many Men are judged to want the Innocence of the Dove, when indeed they want nothing but ſome of the Wiſdom of the Serpent; and Men are ſuſpected of very evil Deſigns, and black Intentions, when indeed their Hearts are free from Malice, and their Indiſcretion is their only Fault. This ſhews, however, how neceſſary it is, in order to promote the Honour of God and Religion, always to walk by this Rule, and to take care *that our Good be not evil ſpoken of.*

It will appear likewiſe to be a Part of that Charity which is owing to our Neighbour: We know how much his Happineſs depends upon approving that which is good; *Without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God:* Ought we not then to labour to recommend Virtue and Religion

Religion to his Choice, to render it acceptable in his Sight, and by that Means lead him to taſte the Fruit of the Tree of Life? And how is this to be done? Not by rendering our Good odious and offenſive to him; not by making it Matter of Reproach and Scandal to him; but by ſetting it forth in its native Gentleneſs, without Scandal or Offence; that he may be aſhamed of nothing, but that he did not ſooner love and embrace it. Thus muſt the Salvation of Mankind be ſet forward; *Hæ tibi erunt Artes:* Let Ignorance and Superſtition triumph in Reproach, ſupported by Wilfulneſs and haughty Pride; but let Truth rejoice in Meekneſs, and become all Things to all Men, that it may gain ſome. But, further,

It is a Piece of Juſtice that we owe to Ourſelves and our own Character, to render our Good irreproachable: When our Good ſuffers, we muſt ſuffer with it, and partake in the Reproaches that fall on it: And therefore it is Prudence, with reſpect even to our own Intereſt and Credit, to avoid giving Offence as much as poſſible. It is Matter of Doubt, whether it be juſtifiable in the Good we do to have Regard to our own Reputation: To make

it the End of what we do is certainly bad; for the Applauſe of the World is not the End of Religion: But a good Man is capable of doing ſo much Good by having a good Reputation, that it is certainly his Duty to conſult his Credit and Character in what he does: For this Reaſon he ought to reſtrain himſelf in thoſe Freedoms, which in the Judgment of the World are unbecoming his Character, though in themſelves they be innocent and harmleſs. But ſurely there cannot be a more innocent way of aſpiring to a Reputation, than taking care that our Good be not evil ſpoken of; than in providing againſt the Miſtakes and Miſinterpretations that others may make of what we do: And therefore this Argument, in this Caſe, may juſtly be allowed its full Weight.

And thus you ſee of what great Moment it is to render our Good unſuſpected and free from Reproach: It is the Way to advance our own Credit, to conſult the Good of our Neighbour, and to promote the Honour and Glory of God.

This prudent Behaviour is not inconſiſtent with a ſteady and conſtant Adherence to the Truth;

Truth; for the Truth is not to be deſerted that it may not be evil ſpoken of, but it is to be practiſed without Offence.

In Matters eſſential to Religion there is no Room for Compliance; and in Matters of Chriſtian Liberty there is hardly any Room for denying it: Where we are free, the greateſt Deference is to be paid to the Opinions, nay, even to the Prejudices of others. This Diſtinction is not of my own making; but we have the Exception and the Rule from the ſame Hand; for the Apoſtle, in the Verſe after the Text, adds, *For the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink.* Take the whole of the Apoſtle's Admonition together, and you will eaſily perceive the Meaning of theſe Words. The Diſpute was about the Lawfulneſs of Meats: *I know,* ſays the Apoſtle, *and am perſuaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of itſelf—But if thy Brother be grieved with thy Meat, now walkeſt thou not charitably:* That is, I allow it is lawful for you to eat; but yet, if you eat with the Offence of your Brother, you offend againſt Charity. *Let not then,* ſays he, *your Good be evil ſpoken of; for the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink:* This being the Caſe, forbear eating, when

eating will give Offence: For it is not neceſſary to your Goſpel Obedience, or to the eſtabliſhing the Kingdom of God, that you ſhould eat; for it is a Matter of Chriſtian Liberty, and you may act which Way you pleaſe. From which it is plain, that, in Matters that are neceſſary to the eſtabliſhing the Kingdom of Heaven, we are not at the ſame Liberty to pleaſe and humour Men: For the Reaſon the Apoſtle gives in this Caſe, why it ought to be done, is, that the Kingdom of God conſiſted not in it; which is by Implication an Exception to the Rule, and amounts to ſaying, This Advice which I give you, of forbearing Things which are offenſive, extends only to Matters of Chriſtian Liberty; for where the Kingdom of God is concerned, you muſt be content to follow Chriſt, and us his Apoſtles, *through good Report and evil Report.*

DISCOURSE VIII.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt End be like his.

THERE is ſomething very affecting in theſe Words, and apt to engage us upon the firſt Hearing to become Parties to the good Wiſh contained in them. Whatever our preſent Thoughts, Views, and Inclinations are, yet when our Eyes are called off from the Proſpects of the World, and fixed upon the laſt Point of Life, and we ſtand as it were beholding ourſelves under the Arreſt of Death, and juſt ready to expire, we want no Arguments to direct our Choice to what is beſt for ourſelves. Theſe Circumſtances carry Convic-

tion with them; and how indiſpoſed ſoever we are to live the Life of the Righteous, we are willing to die his Death, and that *our laſt End ſhould be like his.*

There is a Compariſon implied in the Words of the Text, between the Caſe of the Wicked and the Caſe of the Righteous, which the Mind readily ſupplies. The Compariſon is ſtated under ſuch Circumſtances as throw out all Prejudices and Partialities, and bring only the Merits of the Cauſe on both Sides into Judgment. You are called upon to behold the Wicked and the Righteous, both at the Point of Death, and to ſay which Condition you would chuſe for yourſelf: In this View, the Pleaſures and Allurements of the World on one Side, the ſuppoſed Difficulties and Hardſhips on the other, are equally ſet aſide: Virtue and Vice are brought naked to the Bar, cloathed only in their own natural Features, without Colour or Diſguiſe; and, being thus placed before you, your Judgment is deſired. We have no Exceptions to take in Behalf of Virtue to any Judge: Let the moſt Corrupt give Sentence, yet Corruption ſhall not prevail; but Virtue ſhall be juſtified out of the Sinner's Mouth, whilſt he wiſhes

to

to *die the Death of the Righteous, and that his laſt End may be like his.*

It may ſeem perhaps that we have but little Confidence in the Cauſe of Virtue under all other Circumſtances and Conditions of Life, when we defer the Judgment to the laſt Moments, and bring the Wicked and the Righteous to the very Doors of Death, before we venture to aſk your Opinion upon their ſeveral Conditions: It may be thought unfair too, ſo to ſtate the Caſe as to exclude all the Pleaſures and Enjoyments on one Side, all the Difficulties and Diſcouragements on the other, which are the very Conſiderations that are known to weigh moſt with the Generality of Mankind, and to leave nothing but the Proſpect, whether certain or uncertain, of a future State, when every thing is removed out of the contrary Scale, which might ſerve, as in Experience we find they do ſerve at other Times, to balance againſt ſuch Hopes and Fears: It may be ſaid too, that it is no very great Commendation to Virtue that Men ſhould prefer the Hopes it offers to the Fears of Iniquity, when all Conteſt is over in other Reſpects, and at a Time when nothing is left but mere Hope and Fear; for who

would not prefer the moſt uncertain Chance of being happy to the leaſt Degree of Fear of being miſerable, or even to the Thoughts of falling into Silence and perpetual Sleep?

Were theſe Exceptions well founded, it would take much from the Weight of the Compariſon laid before us in the Text: But the Truth is, that there is no Time or Circumſtance of Life in which Virtue may not bear being compared with Vice, the Paſſions and Prejudices and Corruptions of Mankind being moved out of the Queſtion.

The Words of the Text, in their firſt and moſt natural Senſe, lead us to compare the Wicked and the Righteous, not only in their lateſt Hours, but in the whole Courſe and Circumſtances of their Life: They ariſe from the Contemplation of the Happineſs and Proſperity of the People of *Iſrael*, and their future Greatneſs and Security in the Land of Promiſe, compared with the Miſery of the idolatrous Nations, given up to Sin and Superſtition, and therefore devoted to Ruin. *The People*, ſays the Propheſyer, *ſhall dwell alone, and ſhall not be reckoned among the Nations. Who can count the Duſt of Jacob, and the Number of the fourth Part of Iſrael? Let me die the Death of the Righteous,*

and

and let my laſt End be like his. And in the next Chapter, *when he looked on Amalek, he took up his Parable, and ſaid, Amalek was the firſt of the Nations; but his latter End ſhall be, that he periſh for ever.*

Theſe two Places help to expound each other; for, as the Prophecy relating to *Amalek* was completed in the temporal Deſtruction of that People, ſo by Parity of Reaſon the Prophecy concerning *Iſrael* imported the temporal Happineſs of that Nation. It was denounced againſt *Amalek, that he ſhould periſh for ever*; that he ſhould be cut off, and leave no Poſterity behind him: But to *Iſrael* a long Continuance of great Increaſe is promiſed; *Who can count the Duſt of Jacob, and the Number of the fourth Part of Iſrael?*

If we add to this the Remark of the learned Biſhop *Patrick*, that the original Words, which our Tranſlators render *Let my laſt End be like his*, may properly be rendered *Let my Poſterity be like his*, it will give us further Reaſon to acknowledge that temporal Proſperity was not excluded from the Propheſyer's Thoughts, but was contained in his Wiſh, as the peculiar Lot and Inheritance of the Righteous.

The

The other Senſe of the Words, which looks beyond the Limits of this World, and conſiders the Wicked and the Righteous diſtinguiſhed by their Merits in another State of Life, has of antient Times been aſcribed to the Text: Nor need we be much concerned to determine between the two Expoſitions; ſince both fairly ariſe from the Words before us, both are agreeable to the Apprehenſions, and, as far as Experience teaches, to the Experience of Mankind, and both have a Foundation in Reaſon and Nature.

That *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*, that *Sin* is not only *a Reproach*, but alſo a Weakening to *any People*, are Truths ſo univerſally received as to want no Proof. All Lawgivers, in all Times, have thought ſo, and made it their Buſineſs to cultivate Virtue and Juſtice, Temperance and Frugality, and to diſcourage the contrary Vices. Philoſophers and Moraliſts have been in the ſame Opinion, and have taught, with one Conſent, that the Virtue of the People is the Stability of all Governments, and the true Source of public Proſperity. Practice and Experience have, in all Ages, anſwered to the Truth of theſe Speculations. If we conſult the Memoirs of the

the moſt renowned Nations, which have made a Figure in the World, we ſhall find that they roſe to Greatneſs by Virtue, and ſunk into nothing through Vice; that they got Dominion by their Temperance and Probity of Manners, and a ſerious Regard to Religion; and that when they grew diſſolute, luxurious, and Deſpiſers of Religion, they became Slaves to their Neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern.

Beſides the natural Tendency which there is in Virtue to make Nations great and happy, there is this further to be conſidered: If we believe the Being of a God, and have juſt Notions of his Attributes, and think him at all concerned in the Government of this World which he made, we muſt neceſſarily conclude that virtuous Nations are his peculiar Care, and under his immediate Protection; that he counſels their Counſellors, and teaches their Senators Wiſdom; that he goes forth with their Armies, and covers them in the Day of Battle, and brings them home crowned with Victory and Peace.

Notwithſtanding the general Conſent of Men to this Truth, that Virtue is the true Foundation of the Happineſs and Proſperity

of public Societies, yet they differ much in Opinion and Practice in the Choice and Purſuit of Happineſs for themſelves: And yet there is no Doubt but that the ſame Thing which is neceſſary to the Happineſs of a Kingdom, is alſo neceſſary to the Happineſs of private Families and private Men; unleſs we can ſuppoſe that the Body politic may be in a very flouriſhing Condition, whilſt every Member of it is in Miſery and Diſtreſs. As a Nation cannot be ſaid to be healthy, when the private Families of which it conſiſts are viſited with Plague and Peſtilence; ſo neither can it be ſaid to be rich and happy, when the Members are poor and miſerable: From whence it follows, that whatever is neceſſary to the public Happineſs is neceſſary alſo to the private Happineſs of Particulars, conſidered in themſelves, and in the more contracted Relations of Life.

Since then we have the expreſs Conſent of all Men that Virtue is the true Way to public Happineſs, we have, in conſequence, their Confeſſion that private Happineſs muſt be obtained in the ſame Method: How is it then that Men are ſo inconſiſtent with themſelves, as in their own Caſe to prefer the momentary Pleaſures of Vice to the ſolid

Happineſs

Happineſs which ariſes from Virtue? How come they to think, that the ſame Thing which will make all others miſerable will make them happy?

This Difference ariſes not from the Nature of the Things under Conſideration, which continue always the ſame without Alteration, but from the Paſſions of Men, which in one Caſe are excluded, and admitted in the other with all their Force to biaſs the Judgment. When we conſider what is good for other Men, their Paſſions have no Weight upon our Underſtandings, and we deliberate calmly what is right for them; but when we conſider for ourſelves, all our Paſſions are awakened, and often prove too ſtrong for our Reaſon and Underſtanding. The People are happy, you ſay, who are Obſervers of Juſtice, Temperance, and Chaſtity. Very well: And why would it not be as happy for you to obſerve the ſame Rules as it is for them? Can Reaſon, do you think, ſhew a Difference in the Caſe? No: But when a Man judges for himſelf he can lay aſide his Reaſon, and give himſelf up to his Paſſions and corrupt Inclinations. It is a common Obſervation, that it is much eaſier to give good Inſtructions than

than to follow them; and there is much Truth in the Obſervation: But this ought to be no Prejudice to the Cauſe of Virtue; for when a Man ſpeaks Reaſon at the ſame Time that he acts againſt it, he ought to be taken as a ſtrong Witneſs for the Truth.

A Reaſon may be demanded perhaps why we prefer the Judgment of a Man, when he chuſes Happineſs for others, to the Judgment he makes when he chuſes for himſelf. Do we not know that Men are always trueſt to themſelves, and never more ſincere than when their own Intereſt and Happineſs are concerned? Should a Number of Men conſent to a Law for ſuppreſſing Vice and Immorality, and yet indulge themſelves in the very Enjoyments which they forbid to others; whatever we may think of their Opinion concerning the Expediency of Virtue to the Public, yet we muſt not ſuppoſe them to judge that Life may be rendered comfortable and happy by the Practice of Virtue; ſince ſuch an Opinion would be utterly inconſiſtent with the Meaſures which they purſue in order to their own Happineſs.

But if this Way of arguing is allowed, there is but one Law for Man and for Beaſts: Reaſon makes no Difference in the Caſe; for

for the Happineſs of both conſiſts in the mere Gratifications of Senſe: A Concluſion ſo abſurd, that there is no Man unreaſonable enough to embrace it. When a ſickly and vitiated Appetite craves unwholſome Food; Who is in the Right? the Patient, who is eager to gratify his Appetite, or the Phyſician, who ſtands between him and the deadly Experiment, and preſcribes ſafer, though leſs grateful Remedies? The Caſe is the ſame in the Compariſon between Virtue and Vice: The ſenſual Man has a continual Fever upon him; and we can no more judge what will render a Man truly happy by obſerving the Choice he makes for himſelf, than we can learn the true Cure of a Diſeaſe by obſerving the Cravings of a diſtempered Appetite. If Senſe only is to be Judge of the true Meaſures of human Happineſs, in vain is it that we have Reaſon given us for our Direction: It can ſerve only to increaſe our Shame; for a Brute without Reaſon is a much more honourable Creature than a Brute with it.

But we have no Reaſon to decline the Compariſon between the Pleaſures of Vice and the calm Enjoyments of Virtue: Let us therefore take a nearer View of the two Conditions,

Conditions, and ſee whether there be not Reaſon to wiſh that we may live the Life of the Righteous, as well as to die his Death.

As to the good Things of Life, the Wicked can make out no peculiar Title to them: Riches and Honours may be held and enjoyed by the Righteous as well as the Wicked. They differ indeed extremely in the Uſe they make of the good Things of the World: And this being the only Difference in this Reſpect, the only Queſtion in this View is, Whether a Man is happier in the Enjoyment of a large Fortune, when he applies it to the Purpoſes and uſes it within the Bounds of Virtue, or when he makes it ſubſervient to all the Ends and Pleaſures of Vice? Or, if you remove the Fortune out of the Caſe, and carry the Compariſon into another Condition of Life, the Queſtion then will be, Whether the Difficulties of Life, which attend upon mean Circumſtances, are more tolerable to a virtuous or a vicious Man; and which of the two can produce the beſt Supports againſt the outward Evils common to both?

If we allow the vicious Man to have a greater Share of ſenſual Gratifications, we

allow him at once all the Advantage he can claim for himſelf; and ſince he beſt knows how pleaſant ſuch Enjoyments are, let him ſet his own Value upon them. But though we allow him to rate his own Pleaſures according to his own Luſt and Reliſh of them, yet his Taſte will not enable him to judge of the Happineſs or Unhappineſs of thoſe who deny themſelves the ſame Liberties. It is the virtuous Man's Buſineſs not only to abſtain from the Pleaſures of Vice, but to ſubdue the Paſſions of it; and when he has done ſo, he renders himſelf capable of much nobler Enjoyments, which are a perpetual Fund of Delight and Satisfaction to his Mind. So that take the Men in conjunction with their Deſires and Appetites, and there is Reaſon to believe, that, even with reſpect to the preſent Enjoyments of Life, Virtue has infinitely the Advantage over Vice.

But if we look into the Conſequences of their different Ways of Living, ſuch Conſequences only I mean as a little Time produces and makes manifeſt to the Eyes of the World, the Caſe will grow to be very clear. View the Perſons in themſelves: On one Side you may ſee Health and Vigour attending upon Virtue; on the other, Pains and

Diſeaſes following cloſe at the Heels of Vice. But if you look ſtill nearer, and examine their States of Mind, the Difference will appear yet greater: On one Side you may ſee an undiſturbed Reaſon, ſurrounded with a conſtant calm Serenity, and enjoying itſelf in all the Proſpects that are preſented to it by Things paſt, preſent, and to come: On the other Side are diſturbed Imaginations, eager Deſires, perpetual Uneaſineſs, Reflections half ſtifled, and a Mind ever labouring with unpleaſant Thoughts of the Time paſt and the more unwelcome Proſpects of the Time to come. Theſe are natural and conſtant Effects; and ſuch they are ſurely in which the Happineſs of human Life is very much concerned. You may value the Pleaſures of the Body as you pleaſe, and deſpiſe the better Part, the Mind; but you are a reaſonable Creature whether you will or no, and your Reaſon will have the laſt Influence in making you either happy or miſerable. If you lay in Matter for uneaſy Thoughts and Reflections, it is but ſtoring up Miſery for yourſelf, a Miſery from which all the real or fancied Goods of the World cannot deliver you. The Pains of the Mind are never-ceaſing Torments:

Torments: The Wounds of the Body may be cured; but for the Wounds of the Spirit the World affords no Salve: They will feſter and grow deſperate, till they waſte both Body and Mind. The trueſt Touchſtone by which we can prove the Things which are conducive to our Happineſs, is to conſider how they will operate upon our Minds for the Remainder of our Life: For Inſtance, you have an Opportunity of getting ſome great Advantage by doing ſome vile Thing: Whilſt you look only at the Advantage, and think over all the Ways in which it may be ſerviceable to your Pleaſure or Ambition, ſo long the Temptation may be ſtrong; but ſet it at a little Diſtance from you, and the Caſe will be altered: Suppoſe the Thing done, and the Advantage gained; and then put yourſelf into a Poſture of looking back upon the whole Tranſaction, and ſee what Comfort will ariſe from the Reflection: Can you rejoice in the Sight of Woods and Parks, if every Sight of them muſt call to your Mind an innocent Man, whom you ruined in order to obtain them? Such a Thought muſt ever be attended with a ſecret Abhorrence of ourſelves; and how happy the Man

is who lives under a continual Diſpleaſure with himſelf, let any one judge.

This ſecret Diſpleaſure, which wicked Men conceive againſt themſelves, is inconſiſtent with any real Enjoyment: So that Sin lays the Foundation of Miſery, and lays it ſo cloſe to us that we can never remove it. Add to this, that Vice renders Men odious and contemptible, not only to themſelves, but to all the World beſides. There is ſo much Senſe of Virtue left, and will be as long as Men continue to be reaſonable Creatures, that, whether we like it for ourſelves or no, we muſt needs like it for all others: And therefore a vicious Man will always be a contemptible Man; a Circumſtance that will always make him an unhappy Man; for it is impoſſible for a Man to bear Contempt eaſily, when he knows that he deſerves it. So that conſider the wicked Man as he ſtands with regard to himſelf and his own Judgment, and as he ſtands with regard to the World and the common Opinion of Mankind, and in both Views he ſeems given up to Miſery, and to be the Object of his own and the common Hatred.

But

But there is ſtill another Scene to be opened, which will preſent us with a larger Proſpect, and ſhew us far greater Miſeries in Reſerve for the Wicked. Hitherto we have conſidered his Caſe with reſpect only to this World and the natural Effects of his Vice; but aſk him, and he will tell you that this is but an imperfect Deſcription of his Condition; that he has other Fears about him, and ſuch Forebodings of future Miſery as are ſufficient to poiſon all the Pleaſures of Life, were they free from all other Corruption. He ſees that in this Life all Things come to an End, that the Wicked and the Righteous equally go down to the Grave; but what new Diſtinctions may ariſe hereafter, anſwerable to the natural Hopes and Fears of the Mind, he hates to remember, and yet has it not in his Power to forget. Theſe Thoughts are his perpetual Plague: No ſooner is a Paſſion ſatisfied, and the Pleaſure over, but it appears again in a ghaſtly Form, and ſpeaks to him in the Language of *Iſrael*'s King, *Know, that for all theſe Things God will call thee into Judgment.*

Say, however, and it is all that the Wicked have to ſay, that ſuch Imaginations may be deluſive, and ſuch Fears may be

vain: But yet, weak as you ſuppoſe theſe Fears to be, we muſt be much weaker than we are, before we can get rid of them; that is, we muſt loſe our Reaſon and Underſtanding, before we can forget that there is a God who will judge the World in Righteouſneſs. Theſe are natural Thoughts, the plain Reſult of that Reaſon which is born with us; and, be they true or be they falſe, they have a real Effect upon our preſent Happineſs: And if they are true, as I truſt we ſhall all one Day be convinced that they are, they will add Eternity to the Miſery of the Wicked.

We meet ſometimes with ſuch hardened Sinners as are Proof for many Years againſt all Conſiderations of this Sort; but their Hardneſs is no Security to them againſt the Miſery of theſe natural Reflections: Vice will ſoon impair their Strength, and bring down the Pride of their Hearts; at leaſt, Time will bring them within Sight of the Grave; and when Weakneſs and Infirmities lay hold on them, or Death draws near to execute his Commiſſion, they awake as one out of a Dream, and their long-ſilenced Fears begin to ſpeak with double Terror.

And

And what a Condition is a Man in when there is nothing paſt that he can reflect on without Self-Condemnation, nothing to come that he can contemplate without Horror and Diſtraction of Mind? Inquire of him in this Condition, what profit there is in the Pleaſures of Vice? Aſk him, whether the Fears of Futurity are all idle Dreams? And as you like his Anſwer follow his Example.

It is a vain Attempt to deſcribe the Miſery of a Sinner, who lies expiring with all his Senſes about him: The Imagination cannot furniſh Ideas ſtrong enough to paint out this Scene of Woe; and the Experience of it may we never know!

There is in all Men a natural Averſion to Death: The beſt are not free from it: But this is an Evil that has its Remedy. Thought and Reflection will furniſh us with many Arguments to balance againſt this Fear: A Truſt in God, and a comfortable Expectation of an happy Futurity, will enable us to perform the laſt Act with Applauſe, and to give up ourſelves with Courage and with Joy into the Hands of our Redeemer. By theſe Supports the righteous Man, after a Life of ſolid Comfort, may find Comfort too in his Death,

and wait with Patience and Tranquillity for that Summons which he truſts and believes will call him to perpetual Joys.

Could we but rightly balance this Difference between the Wicked and the Righteous in their lateſt Hours, it would ſufficiently determine which has made the happier Choice: But take the whole together; conſider the wicked Man in his Life and in his Death, how he lives deſpiſed by himſelf, and contemned by the World, without thinking of God, or thinking of him with Dread, and at laſt expires under the utmoſt Torments and Agonies of Mind, and we ſhall feel great Reaſon to join in the Petition of the Text, *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt End be like his.*

DISCOURSE IX.

PSALM CXIX. 165.

Great Peace have they which love thy Law.

IN expounding this and ſuch-like Paſſages of Scripture, and in applying them to themſelves, Men are apt to commit two great Miſtakes; which, though they are of a very different Kind, in their Conſequences are equally fatal and pernicious. On one hand, they think they can never ſufficiently enlarge the Promiſe of the Text, or build too great Expectations upon the Aſſurances of Peace that are given to them; eaſily ſuffering themſelves to be perſuaded, that under the general Name of Peace is to be comprehended whatever the World calls Good: And becauſe the Peace which

which they moſt affect, and which moſt ſtrongly poſſeſſes their Imaginations, is that which the World ſuppoſes to be placed in Power and Affluence, in an eaſy Fortune, and an healthy Body, they fondly conclude, that the Promiſe of Peace infers the Promiſe of theſe good Things, which they eſteem as the genuine and neceſſary Effects of Peace. On the other Hand, to ſtrengthen and ſecure their Title to theſe Things which they ſo paſſionately admire, they conſider the Condition to which the Promiſe of Peace is annexed in quite a different View. Here all their Force is employed to limit and reſtrain, and to expound away the Rigour of this Article, and to ſhew upon how eaſy Terms, upon how ſmall a Portion of Righteouſneſs and Obedience, a Man may be numbered with thoſe who love the Law of God, and to whom the Aſſurances of Peace are given. Under this Head they make very reaſonable Allowances to themſelves upon account of the great Perfection of the Law, which renders it extremely hard to practiſe; upon account of their own Weakneſs and Infirmities, through which they can hardly avoid often miſtaking, and often offending againſt the Law; and upon account of the Mercy

of God, which will incline him to overlook their Errors, and to accept their general good Meaning, and their imperfect Performance, for Righteouſneſs and Holineſs. After theſe Deductions are made in the Proportion that beſt pleaſes them, and that beſt ſuits their own Condition, they can, without Difficulty, find themſelves to be within the Articles of the Peace which the Text promiſes; and then they are in eager Expectation of being put into the Poſſeſſion of thoſe good Things, to which they think they have ſo well made out their Title.

But as Error naturally produces Error and Falſehood, ſo theſe Miſtakes are in their Kind exceeding fruitful, and directly lead Men to Miſapprehenſions of God, themſelves, and Religion: For as long as Men conceive the Peace and Proſperity of the World, and the Enjoyments of it, to be neceſſary Attendants upon Virtue and Holineſs, they will be apt to judge of their own Attainments in Religion, and of the Favour of God towards them, according to the Meaſure of the good Things which they enjoy in this Life: Which can ſerve only to fill rich Men and proſperous Men with ſpiritual Pride and Preſumption, whilſt they eſteem

eſteem their Fortune as the Reward of their Virtue; and poor Men and miſerable Men with deſponding Fears and Horror of Mind, whilſt they look upon their Miſery to be their Puniſhment, and the ſure Forerunner of their Condemnation.

As to the kind Allowances which Men make to their own Vices and Imperfections, whilſt they labour to croud into the Number of thoſe who love the Law, I need not ſay of what pernicious Conſequence they are: If Men are once perſuaded that little Religion will ſerve their Turn, a little ſhall ſerve it: It is not likely that thoſe who take Pains to convince themſelves and others that a ſmall Degree of Righteouſneſs is ſufficient for all the Ends of Religion, ſhould be ſo little of a Piece with themſelves as to take Pains to obtain more than what they judge to be neceſſary. So that theſe candid Interpretations of the Conditions of Religion ſeem to lead to as candid a Compliance with the Modes and Faſhions of the World; and the ſame good Inclinations which tempt Men to expound away one half of their Duty, will as eaſily tempt them to forget or neglect the other.

To

To avoid theſe Inconveniencies then it is neceſſary to conſider,

Firſt, The Nature of the Peace here ſpoken of in the Text.

Secondly, Who they are that may be ſaid to *love the Law of God.* And,

Thirdly, To illuſtrate and confirm the Truth of this Propoſition, *Great Peace have they which love thy Law.*

Firſt, then, it is neceſſary to conſider the Nature of the Peace here ſpoken of in the Text.

It is plain the Pſalmiſt makes this Obſervation upon the Experience of his own Circumſtances and Condition, and the many Trials he had of the Favour and Protection of God; and yet to come at this Concluſion he does not ſet forth the great State and Splendor of his Kingdom, or the Triumphs and Glories of his Reign, or deſcribe any Circumſtances of the outward and worldly Proſperity he enjoyed; which yet he ought to have done, had he intended to infer that worldly Peace and Security, and an Exemption from the Pains and Evils of Life, were the never-failing Bleſſings and Reward of Holineſs and Obedience. His Life perhaps offered as ample Matter to build ſuch

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an Obſervation on as any Man's whatever: He was, by the ſpecial Appointment of Providence, drawn out of Obſcurity, and raiſed to the Throne of *Iſrael*: His Life, often attempted by Men, was as often guarded by Heaven; and the Dangers to which he was expoſed ſerved but to convince him how much he was the Care of the Almighty. When Proſperity weakened his Virtue, and at laſt betrayed him into the crying Sins of Murder and Adultery, he ſuffered not only under the Laſhes of a guilty Conſcience, and the Torments of a wounded Spirit, but was humbled likewiſe under the afflicting Hand of Providence: His Glory was darkened, and his Afflictions were many and ſore. Upon his Repentance the Clouds again diſperſed; and he grew happy, as he grew obedient. Thus it ſeemed good to God to deal with him: But ſo far is the Pſalmiſt from conſidering theſe Circumſtances of outward Glory, and making a general Rule from his own Caſe, that in the Text he regards only that Peace which he felt and enjoyed during the Courſe of his Afflictions and Perſecutions; which Peace he found was the undivided Companion of Faith and Obedience in all, even the

the moſt afflicting Circumſtances of Life. Do but mind what Steps he takes to come at the Concluſion of the Text: He ſets out with deſcribing the evil Treatment he met with in the World; *Princes*, ſays he, *have perſecuted me without a Cauſe:* In the next Place he declares what it was that ſuſtained him under theſe Perſecutions; *But my Heart*, ſays he, *ſtandeth in awe of thy Word: I rejoice at thy Word, as one that findeth great Spoil: I hate and abhor Lying; but thy Law do I love: Seven Times a Day do I praiſe thee, becauſe of thy righteous Judgments.* This Love of the Law of God, this Conſtancy in the Diſcharge of his Duty, he found was a perpetual Spring of Joy and Comfort in his Mind, amidſt all the Varieties and unpromiſing Circumſtances of Life: And this leads him to ſing the Triumphs of Virtue and Religion in this exalted Strain; *Great Peace have they which love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them.*

From hence it is evident, that nothing was more diſtant from the Pſalmiſt's Thoughts, than to promiſe outward Peace or temporal Proſperity to the Practice of Virtue; ſince he ſpeaks of 'that Peace only, which the Righteous enjoy in the Day of their Affliction:

Affliction: And for this Reaſon he adds, *and nothing ſhall offend them*; which would have been very improperly added, had he ſpoken of temporal Peace before, in which there is nothing apt to offend any Man; and therefore not to be offended at it is no peculiar Prerogative, or juſt Diſtinction of the righteous Man's Tranquillity. But to enjoy a Peace which ſets us above the Power of Evil; which places us out of the Reach of Fortune; which inſpires us with Courage in the midſt of Danger; which opens our Eyes to look through the gloomieſt Scenes of Sorrow to the bleſſed Hope of future Glory; which eſtabliſhes our Hearts in a patient Expectation of God's Deliverance, ſo that nothing can terrify or diſmay us; is that which the World can never give, and which can only proceed from the bleſſed Spirit of God, whoſe Province it is to confirm the Faithful to the End, and ſo to arm their Faith, that *nothing can offend them.*

This is that Peace of which the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, and which is the peculiar Lot and Inheritance of the Righteous, of him who loveth the Law of God. Great is the Gift, and happy is the Man who can attain to it: But it requires Pains and Labour, and a conſtant

a conſtant Watchfulneſs over ourſelves, to prepare our Hearts to receive ſo noble a Gueſt: For, as long as we carry this Fleſh and Blood about us, and have the Affections and Appetites of it to incite us to Evil, the Solicitations of Pleaſure to move us to worldly Enjoyments, the Temptations of Honour and Intereſt to ſhake our Integrity, ſo long it muſt be difficult to us to reſign our Wills to the Conduct of the Law of God, and intirely to love what intirely thwarts the Bent and Inclination of our corrupted Nature: For it is not enough ſo only to love the Law as to approve and admire it, and to purſue the Righteouſneſs of it with faint Deſires and diſtant Wiſhes, which is ſuch a Love as every ſelf-condemned Sinner has for it; but our Love muſt be active and fruitful in the Works of the Law, and ſatisfied with nothing leſs than the Poſſeſſion and Enjoyment of the Holineſs and Righteouſneſs which the Law preſcribes. And this will more fully appear under the Second Head; which was,

To conſider who they are who may be ſaid to *love the Law of God.*

In this Pſalm we often find holy *David* declaring how much he loved the Law of

God: *In thy Law*, ſays he, *is my Delight: I have choſen thy Precepts: My Soul hath kept thy Teſtimonies, and I love them exceedingly: I love thy Commandments above Gold, yea, above fine Gold: I truſt in thy Word: I have hoped in thy Judgments:* And many other like Expreſſions full of Regard and Affection to the Laws of God occur frequently. *David* then loved the Law of God: May we therefore, from his Character, ſafely draw the Picture of a Man who loves the Law of God? By no Means; for though at the Time of penning this Pſalm his Heart was right with God, yet at other Times he had highly provoked and grievouſly offended him: *David* was a different Man at different Times; and, when he was a Lover of the Law of God, he heartily condemned and lamented what he was before, and bleſſed God for viſiting him with ſuch Afflictions as ſerved to awaken his Conſcience, and make him ſee and forſake the Errors of his Ways. Thus, in this very Pſalm, he confeſſes, *Before I was afflicted I went aſtray*; and immediately after, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes:* And ſoon after he acknowledges the Mercy and Goodneſs of God to him in afflicting him, *I know, O Lord,*

O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in Faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me. What therefore *David* in himſelf condemned when he loved the Law of God, cannot be thought to be conſiſtent with the Character of one who loves the Law of God. It is a vain and imaginary Comfort therefore which Sinners raiſe to themſelves, out of the worſt Part of the Character of *David*, and other holy Men; endeavouring, by their Example, partly to defend, and partly to excuſe their Sins. There is a Comfort, indeed, which Sinners may draw from hence: Theſe Examples are a great Encouragement to Repentance and the Forſaking of Sin; ſince here they may ſee how readily God embraced the returning Prodigal. From hence they may hope, that though their Sins be red as Scarlet, yet ſhall they be waſhed white as Snow; though they, like *David*, are grievous Sinners, yet, like him, may they become Lovers and beloved of God, if, like him, they repent and condemn their Iniquities. This is the Inſtruction which the Scripture holds forth to us in theſe Examples: But as long as Men make uſe of them to ſooth and flatter their Conſciences in the quiet Enjoyment of Sin, ſo long do

they abuſe the Goodneſs and Mercy of God in ſetting forth to us theſe Inſtances of his Patience and Long-ſuffering towards Sinners.

But though the Example of *David* in all Parts of it is no ſafe Direction to us, yet his inſpired Writings are; and we need go no further than this Pſalm for the righteous Man's Character: In the very Beginning of it he deſcribes him to be a Man *undefiled in the Way, who walks in the Law of the Lord, who keeps his Teſtimonies, and ſeeks him with the whole Heart, who does no Iniquity.* In ſpeaking of himſelf, the firſt good Thing he found to ſay was his Repentance: This was his firſt Step towards becoming a Lover of God: *I thought*, ſays he, *on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Teſtimonies: I made Haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* His next Step was to forſake his wicked Companions, and to aſſociate with ſuch as feared the Lord: *I am a Companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.* The Reſolutions he had formed of perſevering in Holineſs he thus expreſſes: *Thy Teſtimonies have I taken as an Heritage for ever: I have inclined mine Heart to perform thy Statutes always to the End.* In the Verſes before the Text, and where he is deſcribing

deſcribing that Senſe of Religion which was the Source of all the Peace and Joy which he found amidſt his bittereſt Perſecutions and Afflictions, and which afterwards, in the Words of the Text, he comprehends under the general Term of loving the Law, he thus ſpeaks: *My Heart ſtandeth in awe of thy Word: I rejoice at thy Word: I hate and abhor Lying: Seven Times a Day do I praiſe thee.*

You ſee then what firm Reſolutions of Obedience, how conſtant a Perſeverance in Holineſs, how regular and frequent Acts of Devotion, how irreconcileable an Hatred to Sin and Wickedneſs, muſt meet together to complete the Character of the Man who loves the Law of God. To hate and abhor Sin, to love and delight in the Law of God, are Expreſſions which imply no ſmall Degree of Perfection: They ſuppoſe the main Difficulties of Religion to be conquered, the Struggle with Sin to be over, the Paſſions and Affections to be ſubdued to Holineſs and Obedience, and a Man's Heart to be in the Intereſt of Virtue, and to lead the Way to all the Good he does. There are ſome who, upon different Views, ſuch as are ſuggeſted merely by Fear, or by Intereſt, or

preſent Conveniency, keep out of Sin, and make a tolerable Shew in the Performance of the Duties of Religion: But, alas, their Work is Labour and Sorrow: They have no Pleaſure or Reliſh in what they are about; and ſo far from taſting the Peace which the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of, that Religion is their Toil and Slavery, the Work of a Maſter whom they cannot love, and whom they dare not anger, and whom therefore they ſerve unwillingly, without Chearfulneſs or Delight. Theſe are they who are fond of every Pretence which may help to eaſe them of any Part of their Duty; whoſe Hearts are perpetually pleading the Cauſe of Sin, and inventing and maintaining all the Excuſes which may in any wiſe ſerve to cover and protect it: Whereas they who delight in the Law of God, whoſe Hearts are ſeaſoned with an honeſt undeſigning Virtue, want not to be excuſed from the Work they take Pleaſure in. They who hate and abhor Sin want not to have the Approaches to it made eaſy, or cleared from Dangers, ſince they have no Appetite to embrace the Monſter, which is their Averſion.

Hence it is that St. *John*, in one of his Epiſtles, has given this Mark to know whether

whether we love God or no; *His Commandments are not grievous.* If we like the Work, and take Pleaſure in Obedience, it is the beſt Evidence that we love the Maſter; but it is not to be thought that we love him, as long as we hate and repine at his Service. And this Connection between the Love of the Law and the Love of God was evidently in the Pſalmiſt's View; ſince he affirms of one what, properly ſpeaking, belongs to the other: For the Peace and Joy which good Men feel ariſe from the Love of God, from a ſure Truſt and Confidence in his Favour, from an unſhaken Hope of inheriting his Promiſes, if they faint not when they are tried: It is this only which can make them triumph in the Evil which Virtue expoſes them to, which can give them Peace amidſt all the Tumults of the World, and preſerve the Harmony of their Souls when all Things are out of Courſe, and maintain the Tranquillity of their Minds even whilſt Nature is diſſolving in them.

It is not to be imagined that when the Pſalmiſt penned the Text his Thoughts were no higher exalted than to a Stoical Rapture in Praiſe of Virtue; or that he fetched his Comfort from ſuch uncertain, ſuch diſputed

Principles: No; his Mind was fixed on God, *from whom cometh our Salvation*, and in whom alone the Faithful have Peace and Reſt for evermore. This is the Foundation he builds on, as will appear,

Thirdly, Where we are to illuſtrate and confirm the Truth of this Propoſition, *Great Peace have they which love thy Law.*

How little Peace and Satisfaction of Mind the Enjoyments of the World afford, every Man in his own Condition knows, what Pleaſures or Comforts ſoever he may imagine there are in the Conditions of Life which are above him, and which he has never experienced: So that, allowing Men to judge as far as their Knowledge extends, (which is but a reaſonable Confinement) there is but one Opinion concerning the Pleaſures of the World, which Men of all Ranks and Degrees conſent in; That there is no laſting Peace to be had from them, no Security in them againſt Sorrow and Vexation, no Comfort under preſent Evils, nor any Aſſurance againſt future. But were there that Enjoyment in all Conditions, which moſt Men think there is in ſome, yet ſtill it would be very imperfect, and liable to frequent Interruptions, unleſs ſupported

ported by Hopes of Religion: For as long as Men continue to be of the ſame Nature which they now are, ſo long their Minds will be ever looking forward beyond the Limits of this World, and foreboding to them the Good or Evil that attends them hereafter, when they ſhall be ſtripped of all their preſent Supports and Poſſeſſions. The Pleaſures of this Life cannot ſuſtain the Spirit of a Man againſt theſe Apprehenſions, but muſt loſe their own Heat by Degrees, from the continual Damps which will ariſe from ſuch Reflections.

So that let the World be as valuable as it will, we diſpute it not with you; yet ſomething elſe is wanting to give Peace to the Mind, ſomething that can calm the Fears and raiſe the Hopes for Futurity; and this nothing but Religion can do, which entitles us to his Protection, before whom Things paſt, preſent, and to come bow down and obey. If we have the Aſſurance of his Love and Favour to us, nothing can diſturb us; we ſtand upon a Rock againſt which the Winds and Waves may ſpend their Fury, but ſhall ſpend it in vain; for it is immoveable. This Aſſurance of God's Favour is but one and the ſame Thing with what

what we call a good Conſcience: For what Force is there in a good Conſcience to give us Peace, but only this, That it is our Teſtimony, that we have faithfully and diligently ſerved our God; which is the Ground of our Hope and Confidence in him? And when we are thus armed, and can without Reſerve profeſs, *I have loved thy Law, O God, and my Delight hath been therein*, we ſhall be ſuperior to all the Evils of Life. The very Circumſtances which give Terror to the worldly Man, and fill his Breaſt with Horror, will give Eaſe and Comfort to us. When he thinks of the Shortneſs of his Life, and the ſpeedy Account he muſt give to God, his Blood retires to his Heart, and hardly there maintains its Poſt: But when the good Man's Thoughts are ſo fixed, his Heart ſprings with Joy, and all his Hopes begin to bloom: The Proſpect of that bleſſed Day ſo fills his Mind, and engages all his Thought, that he is loſt in Pleaſure and Delight, and forgets all the Pains and Calamities of Life: Not the Tyrant's Frown, nor the Executioner who waits for Blood, can rob him of his Peace: He looks on them as Meſſengers ſent by Providence to deliver him from his Pain, and to carry him

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to the Haven of his Reſt, where his Soul longs to be. This, this only was the Art by which Saints and Martyrs overcame the World, and looked upon Racks, and Gibbets, and every Form of Death, but as ſo many Doors opening into the Kingdom of Reſt and Glory. By the ſame Art ſtill do good Men triumph under all the Trials of Fortune: By this they preſerve their Peace in their lateſt Hours, and reſign with Joy their Spirits into his Hand who gave them.

This is a Trial which Mortals muſt undergo: The Time will come, and is now at Hand, when we muſt part with all that our Eyes delight to ſee, and when we muſt go to render an Account to our great Judge: In that Day, where ſhall we look for Comfort, and whom ſhall we call to our Aſſiſtance? Your parting Friends will have nothing but Tears and Sighs to lend you. Then happy is the Man whoſe Truſt hath been in God; who can with Patience, full of Hope, wait the Coming of his Lord, and obſerve with Comfort the Degrees by which he haſtens to his End. It is worth your while to lay the Foundation of this Peace betimes, that you may be able to look that

Day in the Face, at which, even at a Diſtance, the ſtouteſt Heart may tremble: For it is not Courage, but Folly, not to think of Death with ſome Concern, ſince ſo much depends from that Moment.

And were we ſure of nothing elſe, in conſequence of our Faith and Obedience, but to ſlip quietly out of the World, without ſuffering the Agonies which guilty Sinners feel, and which none can deſcribe; yet ſtill our Labour would not be quite in vain: But, ſince this Peace is but the Forerunner of eternal Peace, the Earneſt of future Glory and Immortality, it is worth all our Pains to deny ourſelves in this World, to take up our Croſs and follow Chriſt, to labour to do the whole Will of God, that we may inherit that Peace which belongs to thoſe, and thoſe only, who *love the Law of God.*

DISCOURSE X.

PSALM CXIX. 63.

I am a Companion of all them that Fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.

THERE is nothing more uſeful or neceſſary in the Purſuit of Virtue and Holineſs, and indeed in the whole Conduct of our Lives, than to obſerve the Rules and Methods by which Men of approved Righteouſneſs, who are ſet forth to us as Patterns and Examples in holy Scripture, did attain to that Perfection, which made them the ſhining Lights of the World, and the declared Favourites of God. If therefore we look into ſuch Examples, and from thence draw Rules for our own Uſe, we ſhall be ſure of two very great Ad-

vantages; namely, that the Rules we preſcribe ourſelves will be both proper and practicable; practicable, becauſe drawn from the Practice of Men like ourſelves; and proper, becauſe we aim at no other End than that which good Men before us have attained to by the Uſe of theſe very Means, and, conſequently, for the attaining of which theſe Rules have already by Experience been found to be proper.

This Diviſion of the 119th Pſalm, from which the Text is taken, ſets before us the ſeveral Steps by which *David* recovered himſelf from the Sin in which he had been involved: In the firſt Verſe he declares his Choice, *Thou art my Portion, O Lord*; and his Reſolution to purſue that Choice, *I have ſaid that I would keep thy Word:* This he knew by ſad Experience that he was not able to do, without the Aſſiſtance and Support of God; and therefore the next Step was to apply for his Aſſiſtance, *I intreated thy Favour with my whole Heart.* Having thus prepared himſelf, he ſet diligently to examine his Heart, and to form Reſolutions, and immediately to put thoſe Reſolutions into Practice, *I thought on my Ways: I turned my Feet unto thy Teſtimonies: I made Haſte, and*

and delayed not to keep thy Commandments. This was a good Beginning, and theſe very promiſing Reſolutions; but to ſecure them there was Need of Patience and Courage, and Faith towards God. The Way that leads to Life is narrow, and beſet with Dangers; and we begin in vain, unleſs we are prepared to endure Hardſhip like good Soldiers of Chriſt. The next Thing therefore he mentions, and which we are to learn from him, is Stedfaſtneſs when we are tried: *The Bands of the Wicked*, ſays he, *have robbed me; but I have not forgotten thy Law.* He then reſolves on a conſtant and uninterrupted Devotion towards God: *At Midnight I will riſe to give Thanks unto thee, becauſe of thy righteous Judgments.* After this follow the Words of the Text, *I am a Companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.*

At firſt Sight this ſeems to be but a little Thing to mention, after ſo many great Attainments ſpoken of before: After he had remembered his holy Reſolutions, his immediate and uninterrupted Purſuit of them, his Conſtancy and Steadineſs under Affliction, his perpetual Devotions, what ſhould lead him to fall ſo low as to add, that he

he was careful to keep good Company? What elſe could lead him to it but his own Experience, which had taught him that this Care was the great Preſervative of all his other Attainments, without which they would ſoon waſte away, and leave him once more an eaſy Prey to the ſoft Allurements of Vice? He knew and had felt how great the Contagion of ill Company was; and therefore with Reaſon adds, in the laſt Place, that which was his greateſt Care, the avoiding the Society of wicked and voluptuous Men; a Snare in which he had once already almoſt periſhed, and in which he had been intirely loſt, had not God ſent his afflicting Angel to terrify and awaken his Conſcience, which was ſtupified with ſenſual Pleaſures, and ſleeping the Sleep of Death. So ſenſible was the holy Pſalmiſt of this Danger, that he not only reſolved for himſelf to avoid it, but made it his early Care to forewarn his Son of it: And ſuch Impreſſions did the repeated Admonitions of his Father make upon the Mind of *Solomon*, that in the Book of *Proverbs*, when he comes to mention this neceſſary Advice of ſhunning the Company of wicked and evil Men, he no longer ſpeaks in his own Perſon,

Perſon, but, being full of the Image of his Father when he delivered the Inſtruction, introduces him giving the Advice to him, his Son: *Hear, ye Children,* ſays he, *the Inſtruction of a Father, and attend to know Underſtanding: For I was my Father's Son, tender and only-beloved in the Sight of my Mother. He taught me alſo, and ſaid unto me, Let thine Heart retain my Words; keep my Commandments, and live.* And ſoon after follows, among his Father's Precepts, this: *Enter not into the Path of the Wicked, and go not in the Way of evil Men: Avoid it, paſs not by it, turn from it, and paſs away.*

But what Need is there, you will ſay, to look far for this Advice, ſince it is of all others the moſt obvious, and an Inſtruction which all Parents give to their Children as well as *David.* It is true, they do; and for that Reaſon it is commonly looked on as Advice fit only for Children: And young People hardly think themſelves Men till they have broke looſe from all Reſtraints of this Kind, and ſhewn the World that they are at Liberty to chuſe the worſt of Company for themſelves, without being called to an Account for it. And this weak Ambition of ſhewing themſelves to be Men,

and at their own Diſpoſal, every Day betrays Youth into ſuch Hands as lie in wait either for their Souls or their Eſtates; as if the only Way they had to convince the World that they are in their own Power, were to do that for themſelves which every body knows no Friend would do for them.

But, to remove this Prejudice againſt the Advice implied in the Text, I deſire you would conſider, that though *David* gave this Inſtruction betimes to his Son, yet he himſelf, in his more advanced Years, and under his greateſt Improvements in Virtue and Holineſs, thought fit to lay it down for himſelf as a Rule to be obſerved in the Conduct of his Life; as a great Security to his Virtue, and Defence of his Innocence and Integrity: '*Depart from me*, ſays he, *ye evil Doers; for I will keep the Commandments of my God*, ver. 115. He hardly thought it practicable to aſſociate with evil Doers, and yet to keep the Commandments of God; as is plain from the Reaſon he gives, why he would have the Evil depart from him; *For*, ſays he, *I will keep the Commandments of my God:* Which would be no Reaſon, were there not a moral Impoſſibility of keeping the Commandments of God, without departing from

from evil Doers. As long as Men are in a State of Trial, that is, as long as they are in this Life, they cannot arrive at ſuch a Pitch of Perfection as may make it ſafe for them to expoſe themſelves unneceſſarily to the Temptations of Vice, and to, the greateſt of Temptations, the conſtant Inſinuations of wicked Men. The Reaſonableneſs of the Pſalmiſt's Practice deſcribed in the Text, and of the Rule therein implied, muſt be deduced from the Conſideration of the great Danger of the contrary Practice, in keeping ill Company, and from the great Advantage of contracting Friendſhips with the Good.

But, before I enter into this Argument, I muſt obſerve to you, that none are concerned in it but ſuch as have a Senſe of Religion, and a due Regard to Virtue; for theſe are the two Things in Danger from ill Company: And it is certain, that ſuch as have no Regard either to Virtue or Religion are not within the Reach of any Arguments drawn from the Dangers which threaten them. Upon this Topic therefore I can only ſpeak to ſuch as have an Awe of God, and a Senſe of their Duty upon their Minds; and ſuch I hope it will not be hard to convince of the great Danger there is in

contracting Friendſhips and Familiarities with Men who have proſtituted their Minds and their Bodies to the Service of Sin. For,

Firſt, Let it be conſidered, that no Reſolutions which we can form to ourſelves of keeping clear from the Pollutions of the Company we keep can give us any Security of preſerving our Innocence and Virtue: Such Reſolutions are often carried into bad Company, but ſeldom or never come off whole; for, when the Foundation upon which ſuch Reſolutions ſtand is undermined, they muſt neceſſarily fall to Ruin. You reſolve againſt Sin, becauſe you have a Senſe of the Heinouſneſs of it, and the evil Conſequences which attend it; but it is great Odds but this wears off by conſtantly converſing with ſuch as have learnt to make a Mock of Sin, and can talk of their own and others' Vices with a great deal of Humour and Raillery. When once you come to reliſh this Subject, and to find Sport and Entertainment in that which ought to give you Horror and Averſion, it is but an eaſy Step to practiſe what you thus far approve; and when once you are giving Way, and inclining to yield to the Sollicitations of Vice,

your

your evil Genius will ſoon furniſh you with many Excuſes, and many Suggeſtions to encourage you. It will be no hard Matter for you to imagine that your Fears are the mere Prejudices of Education; and the Example of your Friends, who ſin and fear not, will ſtrengthen the Imagination; and your Heart, your treacherous Heart will ſay to you, Behold they ſin, and no Evil happeneth unto them. Thus ſeduced, and thus betrayed, you are left an eaſy Prey to Sin; your Reſolutions fall before the prevailing Influences of Pleaſure, in the Arms of which you fall aſleep, perhaps never more to wake again to your Senſe and Reaſon, till the laſt Trumpet calls you, with all your Sins, to ſtand before the Judgment-Seat of God. But further,

Secondly, Suppoſe all theſe unhappy Circumſtances ſhould not meet to puſh on and compleat your Ruin; yet even the Opportunities and Advantages for Sin, which an ill Acquaintance affords, are of themſelves great Temptations. Men are not always alike upon their Guard: Their Virtue is not at all Times equally ſtrong: And it is the Happineſs of good Men, who are unacquainted with the Ways of Wickedneſs, that

in their weakeſt State, when they are moſt tried with Temptations, they want the Skill and Knowledge of ſinning. This Guard you certainly loſe to your Virtue and Innocence by entering the Societies of wicked Men: They will always be ready to ſecond your Temptations, and make the Way to Sin eaſy and practicable: They will, as far as in them lies, prevent the preventing Grace of God, and rob you of the Benefit of it: They will watch your weakeſt Hours, that they may triumph in your Fall, and have the malicious Pleaſure of ſeeing you become like one of them. Were I ſubject to ſudden and violent Efforts of Paſſion, I would not venture myſelf in a Man's Company who I knew would clap a Sword or a Piſtol into my Hand in the Heighth of my Rage, and rejoice to ſee the Miſchief and Extravagance of my Fury: But this is the very Choice which every Man makes for himſelf, when he courts the Friendſhips and Acquaintance of wicked Men. You are a Man ſubject to Paſſions and Temptations; you have Inclinations to Evil, which you are not always ſure of controlling: Whenever they attack you, your beſt Refuge is to Reaſon, and Thought, and Prayer: Why then will you put

put yourſelf into ſuch Hands, which you know will never ſuffer you to enjoy theſe Advantages; which will leave you no Time to think, but will drive you on to follow the preſent evil Paſſion, till it raiſes a Flame that will conſume and deſtroy you?

Thirdly, It is on all Hands acknowledged that there are many Difficulties in the Practice of Religion, even when we call in all the Aſſiſtance, and take all the Advantages that may be had: And in the Nature of the Thing it is neceſſary it ſhould be ſo; ſince we are called here to a State of Trial, to give Proof of our Virtue and Faith, and ready Submiſſion to the Will of God; in doing of which, if there were no Difficulty, there would be no Trial. Now whoever conſiders this, and that upon the Conſequence of this Trial our Hopes, our Happineſs, Ourſelves depend, muſt needs think it extreme Folly in any Man who ſhall refuſe any Helps that may be had towards making his Work eaſy to him; or who ſhall voluntarily expoſe himſelf to any Difficulties that may render the Iſſue of his Trial more doubtful and uncertain: And this every Man confeſſedly does, who lays himſelf open to the Art, and Cunning, and

deadly Inſinuations of evil Men, who are induſtrious in the bad Cauſe they ſerve; and, as the wiſe King expreſſes it, *They ſleep not except they have done Miſchief; and their Sleep is taken away unleſs they cauſe ſome to fall: They eat the Bread of Wickedneſs, and drink the Wine of Violence.* And if you partake in the Bread and the Wine, it will not be long before you take Share in the Wickedneſs and Violence that procure them: For that which you eſteem perhaps the moſt innocent Employment of your Companions, their living in Splendor, and in all the Delicacy of Profuſeneſs, and ſpending their Time in luxurious Eaſe and Forgetfulneſs, leads naturally to all other Exceſſes of Vice and Lewdneſs; for when the Fulneſs of Meat and Drink has driven out Thought and Care, in the room of them there ſprings up a blind brutal Courage, which neither fears God, nor regards Man.

Even this ſenſual Indulgence, diſtinct from the miſchievous Conſequences that attend it, is that which will expoſe us to the Wrath and Judgment of God: *Riotous Perſons and Drunkards* are numbered with thoſe who *ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; It is a Crime that is heightened by a Kind

of Self-Murder, deſtroying the Man which was formed after the Image and Likeneſs of God; diveſting him of Senſe and Reaſon, and every thing elſe that was to diſtinguiſh him from the Beaſts of the Field, and leaving him even in a worſe Condition than they, a mere helpleſs and uſeleſs Carcaſs. What a Life does that Man lead, who waſtes half his Time in thinking only how he may be without Thought the reſt of the Day! whoſe ſhort Mornings are ſpent in contriving the Exceſſes of the Night, and his waking Hours employed in preparing himſelf for a new Lethargy and the Sleep of Intemperance!

Should you therefore only propoſe to ſhare theſe Enjoyments with the Libertines, and to keep a ſtrict Hand upon yourſelf as to all other Kinds and Degrees of Wickedneſs; yet even this is deſtructive of the Hopes of Religion. If you bring but a Taſte and Reliſh with you for theſe Pleaſures, Uſe and Cuſtom and Example will ſoon make you a Proficient: And you will wonder perhaps, when it is too late, to find yourſelf loſt in ſuch Exceſſes as you never once thought of looking into. Your chearful Nights, and the heavy Mornings which follow them, will indiſpoſe you for Thought and Reflection; and

and the Senſe of Religion, which lives and is nouriſhed only by the Exerciſe of Thought and Reaſon, will gradually decay: The Comforts of an innocent Mind, which uſed to warm your Soul with Delight, and make it ſpring forth with Joy into the Contemplations of God and of Futurity, will all forſake and leave you; and in the room of them will ſucceed miſgiving Fears and Doubts full of Miſtruſt, evil Suggeſtions, and jealous Apprehenſions of God and of yourſelf; till at laſt you are forced to fly for Refuge to thoſe repeated Acts of Intemperance, which at firſt you only taſted as tranſient Diverſions. And when once this comes to be the Caſe, that you are afraid of yourſelf and your own Thoughts, and forced to fly from the Preſence of your own Mind, nothing can ſave you but the more than ordinary Grace of God, which whether you will deſerve, or no, you yourſelf ſhall judge.

But the Mercies of God are without Meaſure, and, like the Sun, *riſe upon the Evil and the Good, on the Juſt and the Unjuſt:* Perhaps then he will look down on you, and awaken you once more to ſee your Danger and the Evil of your Ways. This is the beſt Thing which can befall you:

But

But, could you be ſure of this, there is no Encouragement in it to enter into the Societies of wicked and profligate Men; for, alas, you little think what Miſery, even upon this Suppoſition, you are preparing for yourſelf: For, when you are immerſed in Senſuality, the gentle and the kind Calls of the Spirit will not awaken you: Rougher Methods are grown neceſſary, becauſe your Senſe of Feeling is too far gone to be affected with ſoft ones: Fire and ſharp Knives can only reach the Feeling of a Man grown ſtupid in a Lethargy or an apoplectic Fit; and therefore they only muſt be applied. In ſpiritual Diſtempers the ſame Method is uſed by the Wiſdom of God: How was *David* called back to himſelf? By grievous Afflictions and heavy Judgments, by uncommon Misfortunes, which only could raiſe him to ſee his wretched State. And is it worth our while, for any Pleaſures of Sin, to make it neceſſary for God to ſend Miſery and Affliction to dwell with us; to bring ourſelves into ſo deſperate a Condition, as to want ſo deſperate a Remedy?

And yet the external Evils and Afflictions, which by theſe Means we ſhall call down upon ourſelves, will be but one Part, and a

light Part of our Miſery: For when we come with Eyes open to ſee the Danger of our Condition, to behold Hell gaping wide to receive us, and that there is nothing to keep us from preſent Ruin but the ſlender Thread of Life upon which we hang, what Fears, what Torment, nay, what Deſpair will poſſeſs our Minds? When we look back upon the Courſe we have run, and ſee with unprejudiced Eyes the Wickedneſs we have committed; when we number the Nights and Days ſpent in the Service of Sin, the Injuries done to Men, and the Indignities offered to God, where ſhall we begin to repent, or with what Courage ſhall we ſet about a Work which ſeems too large to be compaſſed in the little Time we have left ourſelves to work in? And, when we do begin, how unpleaſant muſt the Work be to us? with what Confuſion ſhall we lift up to Heaven our offending Hands and Eyes? with what Tremblings of Heart implore the Mercy we have long deſpiſed, and petition for that Grace which often perhaps we have ridiculed and ſet up to be a Sport for Fools? Believe me, there is great Difference in the religious Work of an innocent, virtuous Man, and of a returning Sinner: And you cannot make

make a worſe Bargain for yourſelf than to ſin upon the Proſpect of Repentance: No Pleaſures can recompence you for the Change you make. To approach the Throne of God with filial Confidence and Joy, and to appear before it with the Fear of ſelf-condemned Criminals, are very different States. None but thoſe who have felt the Sinner's Pains, the Remorſe and Anguiſh of Mind which attend him in every Step, can truly judge of this Matter: And from ſuch Experience God defend us all!

Upon the whole then, ſince the Danger of aſſociating with wicked Men is ſo evidently great; ſince we hazard nothing leſs by it than Ourſelves, our immortal Souls, and all our Hopes of future Glory; and ſince, though we ſhould recover from their Snare, the Conſequences as to this World abound with certain Pain and Miſery, and as to the next, but with uncertain Hopes; let us with holy *David* ſet ourſelves to ſhun this Danger, and with him reſolve *to be Companions of them who fear the Lord and keep his Precepts.*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XI.

PART I.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 18.

For the Things which are ſeen are temporal, but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.

THE Motives to Obedience in all Religions are thus far the ſame, That they depend upon the Belief of another inviſible World, and the different State and Condition of good and bad Men in it: For though it has been maintained, with ſome ſhew of Reaſon, that Virtue is its own Reward, and that Man's chief Happineſs would conſiſt in the Practice of it, though there

there were no other Rewards annexed to it, yet this, ſuppoſing it to be true, is by much too narrow a Foundation to build Religion on; for this could influence only Men of abſtracted Thought and Reaſon, who are in compariſon a very inconſiderable Part of Mankind. The Generality of the World live by Senſe, and take their Meaſures of Happineſs not from the remote Concluſions of Reaſon, but from their preſent Feeling, from the Impreſſions which are made on them by the Things which they deal and converſe with every Day; and the Rewards and Puniſhments of Religion are calculated to this Senſe and Feeling, excepting only that they are diſtant, and not capable of being made the preſent Objects of Senſe: For the Puniſhments denounced in the Goſpel againſt the Unrighteouſneſs of Men, are ſuch as Nature recoils at; ſuch as, according to the Senſe the World has of Miſery and Pain, are inſupportable Evils; and the only Reaſon why they operate ſo weakly upon the Minds and Affections of Men is this, *That they are not ſeen.* The ſame may be ſaid of the Rewards of the Goſpel: They contain the very Happineſs that Nature thirſts after, which is Life and Pleaſure for evermore:

more: But neither can our Eyes ſee theſe Rewards: And therefore they fall ſhort of raiſing Men to that Degree of Virtue and Holineſs which in Reaſon they ought to do.

The Advantage which the Things of this World have in this Reſpect is not to be diſſembled: They play and ſport before the Senſes: The Man of Thought and Reflection cannot but ſee them; and the Man of no Thought ſees nothing elſe.. This Advantage the Apoſtle ſeems to acknowledge, by ſtyling the Things of this World *the Things which are ſeen*, and the Rewards of the Goſpel *the Things which are not ſeen*. In this lies all the Force and Strength of worldly Temptations and Pleaſures; for, were the Enjoyments of this World and the next equally remote, there could be no Competition between them. This moſt Men would find to be true, would they but obſerve a little what paſſes in themſelves and others. There are few but would be well content that that Part of their Life which is paſt and gone had been ſpent in Virtue and Sobriety: They find no Comfort in recollecting the lewd Frolicks and extravagant Vices of their Youth; yet ſtill they cannot reſiſt the preſent Temptations of Pleaſure, but go on

adding to the Account of their Folly and Sin. And is not this a Deciſion of the Queſtion? Does not Reaſon determine againſt the World and the Enjoyments of it? And is it not mere Senſe that turns the Scale of the World's Side? If it be true now, that you do wiſely in preferring the Pleaſures of Life to the Hopes and Expectations of Futurity, it will then be true fifty Years hence, that you did wiſely in chuſing this World, and renouncing the Pretences to Heaven; for Truth is always the ſame: And yet, if you live to ſee that Time, it is great Odds but that you judge otherwiſe, and condemn yourſelf of Folly and Indiſcretion for all your paſt Vices and ſinful Pleaſures. This is a Judgment which we ſee Men make every Day: They purſue the Things that are preſent; but no ſooner are they gone, but they condemn themſelves, wiſhing they could recall the Time, that they might apply it to better Purpoſes. And whence ariſes this Difference, but from hence; that in one Caſe Reaſon is excluded by Senſe and the prevailing Power of preſent Objects, but in the other Caſe is free and unreſtrained, and judges from the Truth and Nature of Things? Throw out Senſe and Appetite, and

and let the Cauſe be heard at the Bar of Reaſon; and the Queſtion then, between *the Things which are ſeen*, and *the Things which are not ſeen*, will be reduced to theſe two Points:

Firſt, Whether we can have ſuch ſufficient Evidence for the Exiſtence of the Things not ſeen, as may make them capable of being brought into Competition with the Things which are ſeen, the Exiſtence of which, in this Queſtion, is out of Doubt?

Secondly, Whether the Value of *the Things that are not ſeen* be ſo great, that we ought in Prudence to forego the Enjoyment of *the Things which are preſent with us?*

There are ſeveral Ways by which we ſatisfy ourſelves of the Exiſtence of Things without us: The chief of theſe is Senſe. This Evidence extends to this World and the Things of it: And though ſome have taken great Pains to doubt of the Exiſtence of Things which they ſaw and felt, yet it may well be queſtioned, whether ever any Man did indeed arrive to that Perfection of Scepticiſm? This Evidence may be ſtyled the ſtrongeſt in one Reſpect, as it moſt univerſally affects Mankind, who much more readily receive the Reports of Senſe,

than the Concluſions of Reaſon. Not but that the Evidence of Reaſon in ſome Caſes is altogether as ſtrong and concluſive for the Exiſtence of Things not ſeen, as Senſe is for the Things which are ſeen. This is manifeſt in the Proof of a firſt Cauſe; where, from the viſible Works of the Creation, the Being of an eternal Cauſe is proved to a Demonſtration, from ſuch Principles as Senſe and Reaſon cannot reſiſt. So likewiſe, from the Teſtimony and Credit of others, we arrive to a Certainty of the Exiſtence of ſome Things which they have ſeen, but we have not; which Evidence is properly the Evidence of Faith, and may be ſo circumſtantiated as to admit no Doubt or Scruple. Upon this Evidence Men act in their deareſt Concerns in this World; and are as well ſatisfied of the Exiſtence of ſome Perſons and Places which they never ſaw, as they are of the Perſons and Places they every Day converſe with. And from hence it follows, that it is no Manner of Proof or Preſumption that Things do not exiſt, becauſe they are not ſeen; for there are ſeveral Ways of being ſatisfied of the Exiſtence of Things; and ſeeing them is but one Way: And Things which admit not of this Proof

may

may admit of another: And therefore it is great Weakneſs to ſuſpect the Reality and Exiſtence of Things merely becauſe we do not ſee them.

And yet the greateſt Piece of Wiſdom that the voluptuous Man has to boaſt of is founded in this Prejudice: He thinks it Wiſdom to be on the ſureſt Side, and not to part with a Certainty for an Uncertainty. The Things of this World he ſees and feels; and in renouncing them he is ſure he renounces what might afford him certain Pleaſure and Enjoyment: But he has not this Notice nor Evidence of future Things: They lie out of the Way of his Senſes; and therefore he looks upon them to have much leſs of Certainty in them than the preſent Objects of Life; and concludes very ſolidly, that it is beſt to make ſure of ſomething, and not to forego his preſent Poſſeſſion for the diſtant Hope of enjoying the uncertain Bleſſings of Futurity. Now Senſe is the Meaſure of his Certainty; or elſe how comes he to take it for granted that there is more Certainty of the Things which are ſeen than of the Things which are not ſeen? His Senſes only prove to him, that he lives at preſent in this World: They cannot poſſibly

prove to him, that he ſhall not live hereafter in another. So that the Evidence of Senſe reaches but to one Side of the Queſtion, to aſſure him of his preſent Being; and yet from this Evidence he concludes in Prejudice to the other World; which is very abſurd, ſince the Evidence of Senſe cannot, one Way or other, affect the Belief of future Rewards and Glories. Now in all Compariſons Men ought to weigh the Reaſons on both Sides: But the comparing and preferring viſible Things before inviſible, for the Sake of the Evidence of Senſe, is comparing and preferring one to another upon ſeeing only the Reaſon of one Side; for Senſe only extends to viſible Things, and has nothing to do with inviſible: And therefore the Judgment that Men are apt haſtily to make in this Caſe, when brought to the Teſt of Reaſon, muſt appear to be groundleſs and precarious.

Since then, in the Queſtion between Things viſible and inviſible, it is evident that Senſe can judge but of one Side; it follows, that Senſe can be no Rule of judging in this Diſpute: For a Rule muſt be the common Meaſure of the Things to be eſtimated, and applicable to both; but Senſe is applicable to ſenſible Objects only,

and

and therefore can be no Rule in any Queſtion between the Things that are, and the Things that are not, the Objects of Senſe.

Allow Senſe to prove, as ſtrongly as you would have it, the Exiſtence of this World, and the Things of it: But how can that affect the Belief of another World? The Exiſtence of this World will not prove that there is no other World. That you live now is no Argument that you ſhall not live hereafter. And therefore the Evidence of Senſe for this World ought to be no Prejudice againſt the Belief of another.

The Advantage of this Evidence of Senſe is great, becauſe it is the firſt that Men come to the Uſe and Application of; and by the conſtant and familiar Uſe of it, they learn to depend upon it, and truſt to it in all Caſes. It is much later that Men come to the Uſe of Reaſon: And this Evidence of Reaſon they have leſs Occaſion for, and ſtill uſe it leſs than they have Occaſion: So that they are not equally acquainted with the Certainty of this Evidence, as they are with the Demonſtrations of Senſe; and therefore are ſeldom ſo perfectly ſatisfied with the Deductions of Reaſon as with the Reports of Senſe. This is the true State of the

Queſtion between the Evidence of Senſe and the Evidence of Reaſon, and the Preference the World gives to the Deductions of one and the other.

Now, if there can be no Evidence for unſeen Things, which may be of equal Weight with the Evidence of Senſe; then indeed the Things which are not ſeen can never be made ſo evident as to ſtand in Competition with the Things which are ſeen. But the Means by which we arrive to the Knowledge of Things which we do not ſee, are Reaſon and Faith; and theſe may afford an Evidence equal to the Evidence of Senſe.

There are many Things which can be known only from Reaſon, which yet are as well received as any Report of Senſe. We ſee many Productions and Works of Nature every Day, the Cauſe of which is ſecret and remote, and not diſcoverable by the Senſes; and yet no Man doubts but that all theſe Effects have Cauſes. You can no more ſuppoſe, againſt the Evidence of your Reaſon, that theſe Things came into Being without any Cauſe, than you can ſuppoſe, againſt the Evidence of your Senſes, that theſe Things which you ſee have no Being. Here then

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the Evidence for the Thing not ſeen is equal to the Evidence for the Thing ſeen. So then a Thing's not being ſeen can be no Prejudice or Preſumption againſt its Exiſtence; ſince ſome Things which are not ſeen are capable of being demonſtrated.

Hence it follows, that though the Things of this World be always before our Eyes, and we have no Reaſon to doubt of their Exiſtence; and the Things of the other World are at a Diſtance, and hid from us; yet this is no Reaſon to prefer the Things of this World before the Things of another; ſince there is an Evidence which extends to Things not ſeen, which is equal to the Evidence of Senſe: And for ought we know this Evidence may belong to theſe unſeen Things of another World; and if it does, then the Things of another World, in point of Certainty, ſtand upon an equal Bottom with the Things which are ſeen.

This makes it very unreaſonable to take up with the Enjoyments of this World as the ſurer and more certain Enjoyments, and to ſuffer ourſelves to be impoſed on by our Senſes, and prejudiced in Favour of preſent Objects: Becauſe, till we have proved and examined the Evidences for the Things not

ſeen, we cannot conclude that the Things ſeen are more certain than they; ſince they are capable of being made as evident by other Arguments, as ſenſible Objects are by the Senſes.

Another Evidence for Things not ſeen is Faith; an Evidence that the World in temporal Affairs pays great Reſpect to, however ſhy they are of admitting it for a Principle of Religion: For there is no Man but who believes a great deal more concerning this World, and the Affairs of it, upon the Report made from other People's Senſes, than he does from his own. It is a narrow Sphere that a Man acts in, and his Senſes go but a very little further than he himſelf goes: And a Man's Knowledge would be extremely confined, were he to know and believe nothing but what he ſaw and heard himſelf. Now there are Things in this World which all People believe to be in the World, and yet not one in ten thouſand ever ſaw them. What Evidence do they believe on then? Not on the Evidence of Senſe; for theſe Things never fell under their Senſes: But they believe on the Report and Credit of others, that is, upon the Evidence of Faith.

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THere then is another Evidence, which the World cannot refuſe to admit as good Evidence for Things not ſeen; ſince Men believe upon this Evidence the Certainty of all thoſe Things in the World which themſelves have not ſeen, that is, of moſt Things in the World.

Now this Evidence, where it is perfect, that is, where there is a ſufficient Number of credible Witneſſes to the Thing in queſtion, falls very little ſhort of the Evidence of Senſe. You can obſerve, I believe, no Difference that Men make between many Things which they take upon the Credit of others, and the Things which they receive from the Information of their own Senſes; which ſhews that this Kind of Evidence may be ſo ſtrong, as to leave no Room for Doubts or Suſpicions.

Now then urge your Objection againſt the Things of another World, that they are not ſeen, and therefore not to be preferred to the Things of this World, which are ſeen: Where lies the Reaſon and Senſe of this Argument? If the Things of this World are ſeen, they have their proper Evidence: If the Things of the next World are not ſeen, they do not therefore want

their proper Evidence. If there be a ſufficient Evidence that is proper to them, and they have that Evidence, they are not the worſe for not being ſeen, that is, for not having that Evidence which does not belong to them.

If then the Things of another World, though they are ſuch as Eye hath not ſeen, are yet nevertheleſs capable of as good Proof and Evidence as the Things which are ſeen, it is extreme Folly, and Want of Thought and Conſideration, to purſue the Objects of Senſe in Oppoſition to Things unſeen, without well examining into the Evidence and Certainty of theſe unſeen Things. When we tell you, that for the Glories and Bleſſings of another Life we have the Certainty of Reaſon and Faith, you muſt needs own that we urge proper Arguments: The Nature of our Proof you cannot ſuſpect. If we have enough of Reaſon, and enough of the Evidence of Faith, you muſt acknowledge our Proof to be demonſtrative, becauſe it is a Proof which in all other Caſes you admit for Things not ſeen, Reaſon and Faith.

The Things of another World may be Objects of Senſe to thoſe of the other World, and

and therefore are capable of having the Evidence of Eye-Witneſſes: Nor ſhould I eaſily be convinced of Abſurdity, ſhould I aſſert that there may poſſibly be a Communication between the two Worlds. Suppoſe then one ſhould come down from Heaven, and report the State of Things there; this would be an Eye-Witneſs, and the Evidence exactly the ſame with that which you admit in other Caſes. He muſt give good Proof indeed of his coming from Heaven; and that in this Caſe is ſuppoſed.

Conſider further, that this Queſtion concerning the future Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life is not the firſt or principal Queſtion in Religion: It ſuppoſes the Belief and Knowledge of God: For unleſs we believe the Being of a God, who is the juſt Judge of the World, there is no Room for this Queſtion of Rewards and Puniſhments. In this Argument then the Being of a God is preſuppoſed; and a Queſtion then will ariſe, whether God can qualify Men to be Witneſſes to the World of theſe unſeen Things? It is not to be denied but that God can, if he pleaſes, reveal theſe Things to Men: And were the World ſatisfied that God had indeed revealed ſuch Things to ſuch

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and ſuch Men, they could not ſcruple admitting them as good Witneſſes in that Caſe. It comes then to this Point, Whether it be poſſible that Men can give Satisfaction to the World that God has indeed ſpoken to them? And if there be any one Thing that you will agree God can do, and Man cannot do, this will be no Diſpute: For ſhould God do that Thing by the Man he appoints to be his Witneſs, the Hand of God working with him would be a full Proof that he ſpoke by the Voice of God, and declared not his own, but the Things of God. And this would be a ſufficient Ground for our Faith.

Since then theſe Things are capable of ſuch good Evidence, it will be worth your while to inquire, whether they have it, or no: And I ſuppoſe it will not be thought the Effect of Reaſon or Wiſdom to reject them unheard, and to follow the Impreſſions of Senſe and Appetite at the Hazard of being finally ruined and deſtroyed.

Every Man who has Eyes and Ears is attached by the Evidence of Senſe; and therefore it would be ſtrange if any Man doubted of the Things, the Evidence of which is ſo continually thruſt in at his Eyes

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And Ears. But to arrive at the Evidence of Reaſon and Faith, requires that we ſhould exerciſe the Faculties of our Underſtanding; requires our Diligence and Attention; becauſe theſe Proofs lie more remote, out of the common Road, and are not to be had without ſeeking for.

This is a juſt Account of the Reaſon why moſt Men act by the Evidence of Senſe, and follow and admire the Things of this World; and ſo few purſue, with any Heart or Zeal, the inviſible Things of another: Not that the Things of this World are in themſelves more real or certain than the Things of another World; but becauſe Men are ſure and certain of the Things of this World, not being able to exclude the Impreſſions of them; and are dubious of the Things of Futurity, not being able to attend to the Proofs of them.

But how well this becomes Men of Thought and Education let any one judge; or what Account they will be able to give of their Neglect, in not ſo much as proving and trying the Things which make for their Salvation, is hard to ſay. Why ſhould your Eyes run away with your Reaſon and Underſtanding?

ſtanding? If you had been to be directed merely by your Eyes, God need not have given you the Power of Reflection: And ſince he has given you this Ability, he will not excuſe your reſigning tamely to Senſe; which was given not to govern, but to ſerve Man. If the Things of another World are capable of being proved, it concerns you to know whether they are proved or no; eſpecially conſidering the vaſt Diſproportion there is between the Things of this Life and the next. The Argument for preſent Enjoyment is ſo far good, that in Things of equal Value a wiſe Man would ſecure his Share as ſoon as he could, and take the firſt Opportunity of enjoying the Happineſs, which would not improve by being ſtayed for. But here the Caſe is very different: The Things of this World are *ſeen* indeed; but that is all: No ſooner are they ſeen but they are gone, and leave the Man more reſtleſs after the Fruition than he was before: But the Things of Futurity are of endleſs Duration, and once enjoyed will never deſert the Poſſeſſor. And therefore it is worth a wiſe Man's Labour to reſtrain himſelf from the preſent Allurement of Life,

Life, to ſuſpend his Happineſs for a Time, which will ſo greatly increaſe by the Delay, and pay ſuch Intereſt for the preſent Self-Denial which he exerciſes: *For the Things which are ſeen are temporal, but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

DISCOURSE XI.

PART II.

THE Second Thing to be inquired into is, Whether the Value of *the Things which are not ſeen* be ſo great, that we ought in Prudence to forego the Enjoyment of *the Things which are preſent with us.*

There can be no Ground or Foundation to perſuade Men to renounce the Pleaſures of this Life, and to expoſe themſelves to the Troubles and Inconveniencies which often are the Companions of Virtue and Holineſs, in Hopes of future Glory and Happineſs, unleſs this future Glory and Happineſs are ſo great and valuable as to recompence all the Loſſes and Sufferings which Men muſt

ſuſtain in the Purſuit of them. But, if this be the Caſe, if the Rewards of Heaven are infinitely to be preferred to the Things of this World, it will then be but agreeable to the common Maxims of Wiſdom and Prudence to chuſe the greateſt, though not the preſent Good, and to prefer the ſevere Duties of Virtue and Religion to the ſoft Allurements of Vice and Pleaſure; ſince our light Afflictions in this Life can be but for a Moment, and will work for us a far more excceding and eternal Weight of Glory. And it is upon this Principle that the Apoſtle argues in the Text; *For the Things which are ſeen are temporal, but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal:* By this he juſtifies his own Practice and Behaviour: He ſuffered Perſecution gladly for the Sake of Chriſt and his Truth: He ſtript himſelf of all the Comforts of this Life, and yielded himſelf up to all the Hardſhips and Evils that Man can ſuffer: But it was upon the Proſpect of future Glory. He was not ſo dead to the Senſe of Nature, as to think the good Things of this World worth nothing; or ſo void of Feeling, as to delight in ill Uſage: But he knew the Value of the Rewards for which he laboured; that they

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were ſo great, as to juſtify the Choice he made, of ſuffering for Chriſt's Sake, rather than of enjoying the Pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon.

The Apoſtle's Argument is founded upon the different Duration of the Things of this World and the other. Now it muſt be agreed that we have the ſame Evidence for the uncertain, and, at beſt, the ſhort Duration of the Things of this Life, as we have for the Exiſtence of them; that is, the Evidence of Senſe. If the voluptuous Man has this Advantage, that in following after the Things of this Life he follows Things which he ſees, and by the Evidence of every Senſe knows to be real, it muſt be acknowledged that Religion at leaſt has this Advantage, that, by the ſame Evidence of Senſe, it proves theſe Things to be ſcarce worth following after or enjoying, ſince they ſo ſoon vaniſh away, and withdraw from being either the Objects of Senſe or of Pleaſure: So that, as to this Part of the Argument, the Allowances muſt be equal on both Sides. The Men of this World have the certain Evidence of Senſe for the Reality of the Things of this World, and that they do exiſt; but they muſt grant, on their

Part, that we have the ſame certain Evidence of Senſe, that theſe Things will not long exiſt; but that both they and their Enjoyments muſt ſhortly periſh together.

Since this then is a clear Caſe on both Sides, and the Principles are undiſputed, let us take this Part of the Argument alone, and examine what are the Concluſions of Reaſon from this Head, That *the Things which are ſeen are temporal.*

To eſtimate the Happineſs of Man, we muſt take into the Account the Nature of his Deſires and Inclinations, and the Nature of thoſe Objects which he purſues. If there be ſuch a due Proportion between theſe two, that the Object is capable of ſatisfying the Deſire, then the Object obtained is capable of making a Man happy. To be reſtleſs and uneaſy, and ſtill wanting ſomething that we have not, will not, I ſuppoſe, be thought a good Deſcription of an happy Life: And yet this muſt always be the Caſe when our Deſires are fixed upon ſuch Objects as do not anſwer and correſpond to them, but fall ſhort of affording ſuch a Pleaſure as may fill and content the Mind. Now there are different Paſſions and Deſires incident to Man: Theſe are not the ſame in all Men, but vary

according to the various Tempers and Habits of Men, and depend upon the Circumſtances of Youth and Age, and the like: But theſe Paſſions being ſo uncertain and mutable, cannot enter into this Inquiry, which is after the natural Happineſs of Man, which muſt be eſtimated by his natural and conſtant Deſires, and not by the ſudden Efforts of Paſſion which he is liable to. Now the moſt natural and conſtant Deſire of Man is the Deſire of Life: There is nothing Nature equally abhors with the Thoughts of not being: But then the Life of this World is but ſhort, and muſt end in Death; and therefore the Life of this World cannot be the adequate Object of this Deſire; and conſequently the Life of this World can never make a Man happy, becauſe it does not anſwer to the natural Deſire, but leaves a Man reſtleſs and uneaſy, and in perpetual Dread of his approaching Diſſolution.

Another natural and conſtant Deſire, which is grafted upon the former, and ſprings from it, is the Deſire of being happy, of being always happy, without ſuffering any Interruption from Sorrow or Pain, or Afflictions of any Kind: Hence it comes, that the Fear of loſing the Thing we poſſeſs and enjoy is

often a Trouble equal to the Pleaſure of the Poſſeſſion; which ſhews that no Poſſeſſion that is not durable can fill and ſatisfy the Mind of Man: Which evidently proves that the natural Deſire is the Deſire of perpetual uninterrupted Happineſs; and if ſo, then nothing leſs than perpetual Happineſs can be the natural Object of that Deſire, or make a Man eaſy and happy. Now, whether the World affords ſuch an Happineſs as this, can be no Queſtion, ſince we have the Evidence of Senſe and Reaſon and Experience to the contrary.

From hence it appears, that to place our Happineſs in this Life, and the Things of it, is at beſt to place our Happineſs where it can never be had. We can never poſſibly free ourſelves from the natural Deſires of Life and Happineſs. The Atheiſt, who would ridicule the Belief of another World, and a durable Life after this, can never bring himſelf to ſay that it is better to die than to live for ever, and for ever happily: So that, at once retaining the Deſires of eternal Life, and denying the Poſſibility of ſuch a Life, he reduces himſelf to ſuch a State as can afford no Happineſs; for to have Deſires which can never end in Enjoyment for want

want of ſuitable Objects, is to have Deſires only to make us miſerable.

If then this World has nothing that can make us happy, nothing that can anſwer our natural Deſires and Appetites, ſurely it cannot be the Effect of Wiſdom or Prudence to confine our Inquiries after Happineſs to this World, where it is not to be had: So that the firſt Concluſion of Reaſon from this allowed Principle, That *the Things which are ſeen are temporal*, is this; That the Things of this World being temporal, and our Deſires adapted to the Fruition of Things eternal, this World can never make us happy; the Conſequence of which is, that we muſt ſeek out for another abiding Place, if haply we may find it, where we may meet with Objects ſuited to our Deſires; the only Means by which we can ever arrive at complete and perfect Happineſs. So that the Voice of Nature ſpeaks the ſame Language with our bleſſed Saviour, and calls out to us in his Words, *Set not your Affections on Things below, where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal; but ſet your Affections on Things above, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through and ſteal:* That is, Place not

not your Deſires on this World, which has nothing that can ſatisfy them; but place your Deſires above, where God has prepared an Happineſs anſwerable to the Impreſſions he has given to the Souls of Men.

That the Things which are ſeen are temporal, is indeed no ſufficient Proof that there are Things which are not ſeen which are eternal; though it is a great Preſumption, that, ſince God has not fitted this World to our Deſires, he has fitted our Deſires to another World; and has not given us theſe Cravings of Nature merely to vex and torment us, without any Poſſibility of their being ſatisfied: But thus far we prove, from the Things of this World being temporal, that they cannot make us happy. And this makes Religion to be a very ſerious Concern, ſince all our Hopes of Happineſs depend on it: For if Religion cannot furniſh Objects adapted to our natural Deſires, nothing elſe can: And therefore Men ſhould think ſoberly and maturely before they reject Religion, and diveſt themſelves of all the Hopes they have, or can have, of being happy. Who would not be glad to live for ever, and to be for ever happy? Is it not then very unnatural to ſee a Man rejoice and triumph in the Thoughts

Thoughts that there is neither a Life nor Happineſs which is eternal? It is, indeed, better not to be, than to be miſerable: And therefore the Thoughts of dropping into everlaſting Silence and Darkneſs may be the Refuge of guilty Fear, but never can be a natural Joy or Comfort to the Soul of Man, which longs for nothing ſo much as Life for evermore. The only Reaſon any Man can poſſibly have to wiſh that there may be no other World, is that he may with the more Freedom enjoy this: And this muſt needs appear to be a wiſe Reaſon, if we conſider the Value of this World, and the Worth of theſe Things, which are no ſooner ſeen but they are gone, and their Place is no more found. I ſhould not wonder, were this World to laſt for ever, to ſee Men of low and abject Spirits ſetting up their Reſt, and giving up the Hopes of more exalted Glory and Happineſs: But now that the World muſt laſt but a little Time, and we much leſs, to ſee Men ſacrifice their Hopes of Glory and Immortality to the mean and poor Enjoyments of this World, is ſuch an Abſurdity as would puzzle any one to account for, who knew nothing more of Man, than that he is a reaſonable Creature. It is

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ſo little Men gain by gaining this World, and ſo little they loſe by loſing it, that the Concerns of this World would weigh but light in this Queſtion, were not Men guided more by the Violence of Paſſion, than either by Reaſon or the regular Deſires of Nature.

For ſuppoſe, ſecondly, that Religion were very uncertain, and a Man were liable to be deceived in his Expectations of future Rewards; let us examine again by this Rule, That *the Things which are ſeen are temporal*, what the Conſequence of this Miſtake would be, and how much a Man would be a Sufferer by it. As to the ordinary Courſe of the World, in which a Man may profeſs his Religion without Diſturbance or Perſecution, the Pleaſures which are conſiſtent with Innocence and Virtue will be found to have more of real Satisfaction than the vicious Man can ever find from the Gratification of his ſenſual Deſires and Appetites. But we will wave this Topic, becauſe the Text goes upon the Suppoſition, that we muſt give up this World, and ſubmit to many Hardſhips and Inconveniencies in it, in order to obtain the other: And at all Times there is Difficulty enough in ſubmitting to the Reſtraints of Religion, till Men have got to be

Maſters of their own Paſſions and Appetites, and have learnt to uſe the World, as not abuſing it.

Say then, that a Man loſes the Pleaſures of this World in following after the Pleaſures of another: His Loſs muſt be valued according to the Worth of the Thing which is loſt. Now Things of this World being very uncertain Poſſeſſions, which are often hardly obtained, and ſeldom long preſerved, the Loſs of theſe Things cannot be ſet very high. It is evident that the Men of the World do not always ſucceed in their Deſires: They are liable to a thouſand Diſappointments, which cut them ſhort in their Proſpects, and render all their Pains and Labour abortive. Of the many who ſeek the Honours and Glory of this Life, but a very ſmall Number attain to the End of their Deſires. Since then to follow the World and the good Things of it is no ſure Way of obtaining the World, it may happen that he that purſues the Glories of another World, to the Neglect of this, may loſe juſt nothing at all; for, poſſibly, had he given himſelf up to this World, he might have got no Share in it: For ſuch is the mutable Condition of theſe Things, and ſo many the Chances

Chances they are liable to, that a Man can have no Security from all his Pains and Toil of enjoying the Thing he purſues: And if by following the World he might poſſibly have got nothing, then poſſibly by not following the World he may loſe nothing; for a Man cannot be ſaid to loſe more than he might have got. And therefore in this Queſtion it is a great Miſtake to reckon up all the good Things of this World together, and then to ſay, theſe Things do we loſe by Religion; for if we had no Religion we ſhould never be able to get the hundredth Part of theſe fine Things; and we cannot be ſaid to relinquiſh more of the World than we might have got had we not relinquiſhed it.

And now you may learn, from the Nature of worldly Poſſeſſions, and your own Experience, what Sort of Chance a Man has of being ſatisfied with the Enjoyments of Life, ſuppoſing him to take the utmoſt Pains for them: Poſſibly he may never get them; for there are ſo many Pretenders, that they are ever joſtling one another out; and, poſſibly too, if he does get them, they may leave him before he has half done with them; or, it may be, when he has got them, he may not like or reliſh them; for many Things

Things which look well at a Diſtance, and raiſe and inflame the Deſires, loſe their Value by being poſſeſſed, and appear to be, what in Truth they are, empty and vain Allurements. Now this Chance for worldly Happineſs is all that a Man quits for Religion; for you cannot ſay that he quitted the good Things of Life, without knowing whether he ever could have had them, or no. It is ten to one againſt you, that if you follow the World you get nothing, or but little, by it; and therefore there are the ſame Odds on the other Side, that if you follow Religion you loſe little, or nothing, by it. So that ſuppoſing Religion to be uncertain, yet a Man does not venture much for it, or put himſelf into a much worſe Condition than he was in before, by reaſon of the uncertain Condition of the World.

And, on the other Side, this may be ſaid, That if Religion reaches no further than this Life; yet one good Effect of it here is evidently this, That it makes Men eaſy and contented under the Diſappointments of this Life: So that whatever the Loſs of the World may be to a worldly Man, yet to a truly religious Man it is inconſiderable, becauſe he is not equally affected with ſuch Loſſes,

Loſſes, being ſtrengthened and confirmed againſt them by the Hopes he has entertained of more laſting and ſolid Enjoyments. So that add this to the Account, and it will appear, that Religion in this World is the ſureſt Step you can take, if not towards Happineſs, yet towards Eaſe and Contentment: For, ſince ſo many who follow the World muſt neceſſarily be diſappointed by following the World, we expoſe ourſelves to all the Uneaſineſs and Pain of loſing it; and, as Things go, it is well if the Pain and Uneaſineſs of loſing the World be not all we get by purſuing it. But Religion is the Art of governing and ruling the Paſſions, of making ourſelves eaſy without being gratified with the Pleaſures of this Life; and when we are thus prepared, not to enjoy the Pleaſures is no great Miſchief. So that if there be no other World but this, yet by Religion we are ſure of getting the ſecond beſt Thing that can be had in the World, that is, Contentment. Admit that the firſt Thing is to have and enjoy the Things we want; yet certainly the next beſt Thing is to be eaſy without them. The firſt the World but rarely grants; the next Religion never denies. And thus far we may argue

from

from the Nature of worldly Things, without entering into the Compariſon between them, and the Things of another Life; which extremely alters the State of the Queſtion, and makes it reaſonable not only to forego the Pleaſures, but even to chuſe and embrace the Sorrows of Life for the Sake of future Glory: *For the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

As to the Nature of the Happineſs of another Life, we know but little of it: The Deſcriptions we meet with in Scripture are figurative, and lead not to the true Knowledge of the Glories they deſcribe. Poſſibly this World affords no Notions or Ideas proper to expreſs the Happineſs of Heaven; which can therefore only be deſcribed in Figures taken from the preſent Senſe we have of Pleaſure and Enjoyment: Hence the Happineſs of Heaven is ſometimes painted under the Figure of a Marriage Feaſt, which is a Time uſually ſtolen from Sorrow, and dedicated to Mirth and good Humour. Sometimes the Deſcription is grounded upon our Notions of Power and Dignity, which are great Darlings to Mankind: Hence we read of Crowns of Glory,

which cannot be ſhaken, which fade not away, which are reſerved for us in the higheſt Heavens. From hence we only argue that the Happineſs is very great, and exceeding much the Glories of this World, which are but faint Images, and ſcarcely ſerve to repreſent the Glories of Heaven: But we have a clear Notion of Duration; and therefore to this Point the Scripture ſpeaks plain, and tells that theſe are Pleaſures for evermore; that they are eternal, and eternally the ſame without changing. Nothing likewiſe is more uſual than to expreſs the Happineſs of Heaven by Life, by everlaſting Life; *Whoſoever*, ſays our Saviour, *believeth in me ſhall live, though he die; and whoſoever believeth on me ſhall not die eternally.* This then is the natural Happineſs of Man, ſince it alone can anſwer the natural Deſires of Man; for nothing leſs than eternal Life can ſatisfy that Deſire of Life which is implanted in Man: And nothing can be more evident to Senſe than this is to Reaſon, that ſomething has been from all Eternity, and ſomething ſhall be to all Eternity: So that our Deſires of Eternity are not looſe ill-grounded Deſires; but there are evidently

Objects

Objects in Nature fitted to them. Since then we cannot poſſibly live without deſiring to live for ever, and to enjoy eternal Happineſs; ſince likewiſe it is clear to a Demonſtration that there are Things eternal; is it not agreeable to the very Inſtinct of Nature to endeavour after theſe Things, which can only make for our Happineſs, if by any Means we may attain to them? To lead us to the Poſſeſſion and Enjoyment of theſe Things is the Work and Buſineſs of Religion: And therefore to be employed in the Work of Religion is to be employed in the Work of Nature, which is to ſeek and purſue its own Happineſs and Perfection.

If Religion is attended with Difficulties, yet the Glories we attain to through the Means of Religion are worth the Purchaſe. What is there that can be had without Pains and Trouble? Not even the preſent Enjoyments of this Life. Why then ſhould we think much of being at ſome Trouble to purchaſe the eternal Things of Heaven? We do not grudge it in leſs Matters, in the Matter of our earthly Hopes and Deſires. We loſe nothing by Religion that we could poſſibly keep long without it: A good Man

can ſuffer only in this World; and were he not to ſuffer, yet the Courſe of Nature would ſoon part him and the World, and the Enjoyments of it. And is it not worth our while to reſign the Things we cannot keep a little the ſooner, for the Sake of that Happineſs, which once poſſeſſed can never be taken from us, but, like our Deſires, will be ever freſh and new, not impaired by Uſe, or palled by Enjoyment?

It is wiſe to retire from the Pleaſures of the World, were it only to guard againſt this certain evil Conſequence, That if we follow the preſent Things, to the Neglect and Contempt of future Happineſs, the Time will certainly come when our preſent Enjoyments will be paſt and gone, when Things future will be growing apace to be the Things preſent; and then we ſhall have nothing left but this evil Thought to haunt us perpetually, That we have had our good Things in this World, and muſt expect evil Things in the World to come; that we have for the Time paſt been comforted, but muſt for the Time to come be tormented. As ſhort-lived as Men are, they often outlaſt the World, that is, the Enjoyments of it: They

They live to be paſt the Pleaſures of it, and can have no Comfort or Eaſe by any Senſe. And is not a wicked Man in a fine Condition, when he has no Enjoyment in this World, and no Hopes in the next? Men, in the Youth and Vigour of Age, may overcome the troubleſome Thoughts of another World: They are capable of a conſtant Succeſſion of worldly Pleaſures, which may extinguiſh Thought and Conſideration: But, if they live to be deſerted by Senſe, to be expoſed to Thought and Reflection, how diſmal a Proſpect have they! how are they tormented with the Thoughts of what is paſt! and how do they dread the Thoughts of what is to come!

And happy were it for them if their Fears were to be their only Torment: But let their Eyes but once be cloſed, and their Fears muſt be ſucceeded by more than even their Fears could ſuggeſt: The Things future will then be the Things preſent; and this Thought, that they are eternal, will exclude all Glimmerings of Hope or Comfort, and leave them the Prey of Pain and of Deſpair.

Let us then work whilſt we have the Day; for the Night cometh when no Man

can work. This is the Day, and for ought we know this only is the Day of Peace. Consider then the Things which make for your Salvation, and follow after them, for they lead to Life and Immortality.

DISCOURSE XII.

General Epiſtle of St. JUDE,
Verſe iii.—the latter Part.

——*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.*

IT is at all Times the Duty of the Paſtors and Miniſters of the Chriſtian Church to call upon the People to be zealous to maintain, and by proper Methods to propagate, the Faith of the Goſpel: But there are Seaſons in which it is more eſpecially neceſſary for them to diſcharge this Duty; Seaſons which require that the Paſtors ſhould be vigilant to prevent, and

the People careful to avoid, the Danger of growing Errors and Superſtitions.

Such was the Seaſon, and ſuch the Occaſion of this Epiſtle. Some very dangerous Errors, and ſome abominable Practices, began to ſhew themſelves among the Members of the Church, and there was great Reaſon to apprehend the Infection would ſpread. *Certain Men*, it ſeems, had *crept in unawares—ungodly Men, turning the Grace of our God into Laſciviouſneſs, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* This it was that made it needful for the Apoſtle to exhort Chriſtians every where to *contend earneſtly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.*

If it was needful in the Apoſtles' Times, when the Miſchief began firſt to ſhew itſelf, what muſt it be in ours, when this Evil ſeems to be at its full Growth, and to ſurround us in different Shapes on every Side? Superſtition on one Hand, and Irreligion on the other, have left true Chriſtians a narrow Path to walk in: And though Reaſon and Reflection will make Men ſometimes ſick of the Extremes, yet the Tranſition from one Extreme to another is much eaſier, than from either to the Truth that lies between them. From Popery to no Religion, and from

from no Religion to Popery, is a ready Step: And when a Man is tired of either Extreme, it requires only a Reſolution to run away from it as faſt as he can, to get ſoon to the other; whereas it requires a ſerious and a ſteady Mind to ſtop at the right Place.

Another Difficulty there is, which diſtinguiſhes our Times from that of the Apoſtles: St. *Jude* complains, that ſome corrupt Men, teaching perverſe Doctrines, had mixed with Chriſtian Societies; but it was by ſtealth and unawares they had crept in: The Churches themſelves were pure and uncorrupt, and profeſſed and taught the true Faith of the Goſpel of Chriſt. But our Caſe is far otherwiſe. There are, indeed, in all Churches, corrupt Members, a Calamity common to all Times: But in theſe latter Days the Infection has ſpread ſo far, and ſo wide, that whole Churches are tainted with it. The Errors we have to contend with are not ſuch as creep in ſilently and unawares, but ſuch as are taught by Authority, and inſiſted on as neceſſary Conditions of Chriſtian Communion: They are preſſed upon Men by an Application of all the Promiſes of the Goſpel to thoſe who receive

receive them gladly, and of all the Threats of the Goſpel to ſuch as embrace them not. Is it not then, now, more than ever, needful to exhort Men to *contend earneſtly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints?*

But it is to little Purpoſe to exhort Men to be zealous for the Chriſtian Faith, unleſs you can give them ſome ſure and certain Mark to know what the right Faith is. If you inquire of particular Churches, or Societies of Chriſtians, which is the true Faith, each of them will anſwer, that the Faith profeſſed by them is the true one, and that other Societies have fallen into Errors and Miſtakes. In this divided State of Things, therefore, no Church has a Right to be believed on its own Word merely, without giving a Reaſon of the Faith which is in them: And yet this Pretence of Authority is the only Thing that can be ſaid, and therefore it always is ſaid, to juſtify the Dominion which the Church of *Rome* has uſurped over the Faith of Chriſtians. With how much better Grace might St. *Jude* have dictated to the Chriſtians of his Time, and told them, upon his own Authority, what the true Faith was, in oppoſition to corrupt Teachers. But does he do ſo? By

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no Means: So far from it, that he gives them another Rule to examine the Faith by, and ſends them to inquire, what the Faith was, which was once, or from the Beginning, delivered to Chriſtians.

Church Authority is one of thoſe unhappy Subjects which is ſeldom ſeen but from one of its Extremes: In ſome Places, and with ſome Perſons, it can do every thing; in others, it can do nothing. I cannot propoſe to conſider juſtly ſo copious a Subject in the Compaſs of a Sermon; and therefore I ſhall content myſelf with laying before you ſome Obſervations on the Apoſtolic Rule in the Text, which may be of Uſe if duly conſidered. And,

Firſt, Since an Apoſtle of Chriſt, in early Days of the Church, ſent Chriſtians to inquire after the Faith delivered from the Beginning, it follows manifeſtly that the Apoſtles themſelves were but Teachers and Witneſſes of the Faith, and had no Authority or Commiſſion to make new Articles of Faith. Had it been otherwiſe, how abſurd was it in St. *Jude* to ſend Chriſtians to an Inquiry after the Faith *once delivered*, when he and they could not but know, that there was a ſtanding Authority to make Articles

of

of Faith, and that no ſuch Inquiry was wanting.

The Truth of this Concluſion may be abundantly proved, by conſidering the Commiſſion and Authority the Apoſtles received from Chriſt, and their Conduct in the Execution of them: *Go ye*, ſays our bleſſed Lord, *into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature*, Mark xvi. 15. The Goſpel then was the Thing committed to them to be taught to the World, and not to be made or to be altered by them; which Senſe is delivered in Terms more expreſs in St. *Matthew*, for there the Words are, *Teaching them to obſerve all Things whatſoever I have commanded you*, ch. xxviii. 20. The Promiſe annexed, *And lo, I am with you to the End of the World*, muſt be relative to their Commiſſion, and they could depend on it no longer than whilſt they kept within the Limits of their Commiſſion, which was to teach what Chriſt had commanded.

When the Time of our Saviour's leaving the World drew near, he told his Apoſtles he would not *leave them comfortleſs, but pray the Father to ſend them another Comforter, to abide with them for ever*, John xiv. 16. The Office of this Comforter is deſcribed, ver. 26;

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The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my Name, he ſhall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you. If then the Office of the Spirit was to *bring to their Remembrance* what Chriſt had ſaid to them, their Office, as Teachers, could only be to publiſh the Doctrine of Chriſt. The Spirit was likewiſe to *teach them all Things*, that is, to teach them to underſtand rightly all Things, and to preſerve them from miſtaking the Meaning of what our Lord ſaid to them, which was frequently their Caſe whilſt they converſed with him on Earth.

Let us conſider, in the next Place, the Conduct of the Apoſtles, and how they executed the Commiſſion with which they were intruſted.

One of the firſt Things they did was to elect an Apoſtle into the Place of *Judas*. When they were to chuſe an Apoſtle, without Doubt they conſidered the Qualifications neceſſary to the Office; and for that Reaſon St. *Peter* declared that the Choice was neceſſarily confined to ſuch as had *companied with them all the Time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among them, beginning from the*

the Baptiſm of John, unto the ſame Day that he was taken up from us: So that no Man was capable of being an Apoſtle who was not capable of being a Witneſs of the Doctrines and Works of our bleſſed Lord: A plain Evidence that their Buſineſs was to report the Doctrines of Chriſt, and not to deliver Doctrines of their own. Accordingly the four Goſpels, publiſhed to inſtruct the World in the Chriſtian Faith, are an Hiſtory of what our Saviour did, taught, and ſuffered: And St. *Luke* particularly tells us, that he wrote his Goſpel *having had perfect Underſtanding of all Things from the very firſt.* So that St. *Luke*, in writing his Goſpel, followed the Rule preſcribed by St. *Jude*, and reported the *Faith once delivered to the Saints.*

St. *John*, in his firſt Epiſtle general, refers likewiſe to the Beginning and firſt Revelation of the Goſpel to ſhew the Authority of the Doctrines which he delivered. Hear his own Words: *That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life—that which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye alſo may have*

Fellowſhip with us. St. *John*'s referring in this Manner to what he had heard and ſeen, to eſtabliſh his Authority as a Preacher of the Goſpel, plainly ſhews that he thought himſelf bound to preach only what he had heard and ſeen, and that he had no Authority to preach any other Doctrine. It is obſervable that St. *John*, in the Paſſage before us, ſays expreſsly, that he wrote the Things he had heard and ſeen from the Beginning, that thoſe to whom his Epiſtle came might *have Fellowſhip with the Apoſtles*: A plain Proof that a Right of Fellowſhip with the Apoſtles, or, in other Words, a Right to Church Communion, depends upon receiving and embracing the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, and not upon any other Doctrines of later Date, by what Authority ſoever publiſhed or declared.

St. *Paul*'s Caſe was a ſingular one: He was not called in our Saviour's Life-time, and conſequently had not the Qualification required in the firſt of the *Acts*, when a new Apoſtle was to be choſen: He was not one of thoſe who had *companied with the Apoſtles during the Time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among them*; But if we conſider how this Defect was ſupplied in his Caſe, it

it will juſtify the Obſervation we are upon in the ſtrongeſt Manner imaginable.

As St. *Paul* converſed not with Chriſt in the Fleſh, ſo neither did he receive the Goſpel from any of the Apoſtles, who did; but had it by immediate Revelation from Chriſt himſelf: So that his Preaching had this Apoſtolical Character, that he taught the Things which he had ſeen and heard of Chriſt. When he was miraculouſly called to be an Apoſtle, to qualify him for the Office Chriſt promiſed to be his Inſtructor: *I have appeared unto thee*, ſays our Lord, *for this Purpoſe, to make thee a Miniſter and a Witneſs both of theſe Things which thou haſt ſeen, and of thoſe Things in the which I will appear unto thee*, Acts xxvi. 16. Accordingly St. *Paul*, ſpeaking to the *Galatians* of his own Authority as an Apoſtle, tells them that he was *an Apoſtle not of Men, neither by Man, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father, who raiſed him from the Dead*, Gal. i. 1. And again, in the 11th and 12th Verſes, *I certify you, Brethren, that the Goſpel which was preached of me is not after Man; for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt.*

This

This Revelation to St. *Paul* extended not merely to Points of Doctrine, but conveyed to him likewiſe the Knowledge of hiſtorical Facts: As is plain from 1 *Cor.* xi. 23. where ſpeaking of the Inſtitution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he ſays, *I have received of the Lord that which alſo I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame Night in which he was betrayed, took Bread, and when he had given Thanks he brake it*; and ſo goes on to give an hiſtorical Account of what was ſaid and done at the laſt Supper; agreeing with the Account given by thoſe Apoſtles who were preſent at the Tranſaction.

From theſe Things laid together it is evident, That the Apoſtles were Witneſſes and Teachers of the Faith, and had no Authority to add any Thing to the Doctrine of Chriſt, or to declare new Articles of Faith.

Now if the Apoſtles, commiſſioned directly by Chriſt himſelf, and ſupported by the miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, had not this Power, can any of their Succeſſors in the Government of the Church, without great Impiety, pretend to it? Did the Biſhops and Clergy of the ninth and tenth

Centuries know the Articles of the Faith better than the Apoſtles did? or were they more powerfully aſſiſted by the Holy Spirit? No Chriſtian can think it, or ſay it. Whence is it then that the Church of *Rome* has received the Power they pretend to, of making new Articles of Faith, and dooming all to eternal Deſtruction who receive them not? Can any ſober ſerious Chriſtian truſt himſelf to ſuch Guides, and not tremble when he reads the Woe denounced by St. *Paul*; *Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Goſpel—let him be accurſed?*

When the Corruptions of the Church of *Rome* were generally felt and complained of, and no Applications whatever could prevail to obtain any Alteration; the Fear of owning an Error, and thereby weakening the Authority claimed, being more powerful to continue the old Errors, than the Force of Truth, or even of Conviction was to reform them; what had ſerious Chriſtians left to do, but to ſeek after, if happily they could find, *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*; to ſeparate between the old Doctrines of the Goſpel, and the new Inventions of Men; and to build up a Church *upon the Foundation*

tion of the Apoſtles, Chriſt Jeſus himſelf being the head Corner-Stone?

What has hitherto been ſaid relates merely to the Doctrines of the Goſpel; to Points of Chriſtian Faith: In theſe, neither the Apoſtles of Chriſt, nor the Church after them, had any Authority, but to preach and publiſh to the World what they had received. If we extend this further, and ſay that the Apoſtles, and Church after them, had no more Authority in any thing elſe than they had in Articles of the Faith, we run into an Extreme, that can produce nothing but Diſorder and Confuſion; which muſt be the Deſtruction of all Chriſtian Societies, and end in making every Man a Church by himſelf.

It may be worth our while to conſider the Grounds of this Diſtinction, as they are to be found in Holy Scripture.

In the eighteenth Chapter of St. *Matthew*, in the fifteenth and following Verſes, we have this Direction from our Saviour: *If thy Brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee and him alone. If he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy Brother: But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of two or three*

Witneſſes every Word may be eſtabliſhed. But if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen and a Publican.

In Caſes which fall under this Direction (and ſome there are without Doubt, or there would have been no Direction about them) the Church has a judicial Authority, and a Right to inflict the Puniſhment mentioned. This Power may be, and often has been, moſt flagrantly abuſed: But to ſay the Church has no Authority in Caſes which come under this Direction, is to deny not only the Authority of the Church, but the Authority of Chriſt likewiſe, who gave the Direction.

This Authority of the Church is taken Notice of by St. *Paul*; and he rebukes the Church of *Corinth* for not making uſe of it, to ſeparate from them the inceſtuous Perſon, who had given Offence not to one, but to all Chriſtians.

But there is another Power which the Apoſtles had and exerciſed, and which they committed to thoſe who ſucceeded them; I mean the Authority of ſettling Churches, and preſcribing Rules of Order and Decency to them.

If

If we conſider St. *Paul*'s Conduct in the Diſputes which happened in the Church of *Corinth*, we ſhall ſee how carefully he diſtinguiſhes between his Duty to preach the Goſpel of Chriſt juſt as he had received it, and his Authority in Matters of Order and Decency. The *Corinthians* had been guilty of great Miſbehaviour in eating the Lord's Supper, as if they had forgot the End and the Uſe of it. St. *Paul*, to ſet them right, gives them an Account of this Inſtitution; and here he expreſly ſays, that he delivered to them *what he had received of the Lord:* But in directing ſome Circumſtances of their Behaviour at this Supper, he ſpeaks in his own Name: *When ye come together to eat*, ſays he, *tarry for one another*; *and if any Man hunger, let him eat at home:* And concludes, with reſerving to himſelf the giving further Directions at a proper Time: *The reſt*, ſays he, *will I ſet in Order when I come.*

As he exerciſed this Authority himſelf, ſo he committed the like Authority to thoſe who ſucceeded him in the Paſtoral Care. The Epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus* are full of Rules or Canons for the Government of the reſpective Churches under their Care; which were to be ſupplied, as Occaſion required, by Orders of their own: *For this*

Cauſe, ſays St. *Paul* to *Titus*, *I left thee in Crete, that thou ſhouldſt ſet in Order the Things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City.*

Which Particulars laid together manifeſtly ſhew, that there was a Power or Authority in particular Churches to ſettle Matters of Diſcipline, Order, and Decency for themſelves; and that there were no Rules of this Kind of univerſal Obligation to all Churches.

As the Apoſtles, conſidered ſingly as commiſſioned and inſpired Teachers, had no Authority over the Faith, neither had they when met together in Council: For the Doctrine and Goſpel of Chriſt could no more be altered by his twelve Apoſtles, than it could be by one of them. We have but one Inſtance of an Apoſtolic Council, which was held at *Jeruſalem*; and Proceedings of it are recorded in the fifteenth of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles.

The Matter here controverted, and ſettled by Decree of the Council, was plainly a Matter of Government and Diſcipline, and not of the Subſtance of Faith; and it was determined by prudential Conſiderations, ariſing from the Circumſtances of the Chriſtian

Chriſtian Church at that Time. The Caſe was this: St. *Paul* had converted many among the *Gentiles*, and ſettled ſeveral Churches in *Aſia*. The *Jewiſh* Chriſtians inſiſted that the *Gentile* Converts ſhould be circumciſed, and obſerve the Law of *Moſes*. *Paul* and *Barnabas*, Apoſtles of the *Gentiles*, withſtood this Demand of the *Jews*, and had, as the Words of the Text are, *no ſmall Diſſention and Diſputation with them.* They agreed to refer the Queſtion to the Apoſtles and Elders at *Jeruſalem*; and thither they went. The Council being aſſembled, the Caſe was opened *with much diſputing* on both Sides: Then St. *Peter* roſe up, and declared his Opinion, and the Reaſons of it: He reminds them, that he himſelf was the Perſon choſen by God to be the firſt Preacher of the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*, and that God had given a Token of his accepting the *Gentiles*, by giving them the Holy Ghoſt, even as he had given it to the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, and *put*, as his own Words are, *no Difference between us and them, purifying their Hearts by Faith*; and then concludes againſt laying the Burden or Yoke of the Law of *Moſes* upon the *Gentile* Converts.

St. *Peter*'s Argument is drawn from the Caſe of *Cornelius*, to whom he was ſent, by expreſs Revelation, to preach the Goſpel. *Cornelius* was a *Gentile*, no Obſerver of the Law of *Moſes*; nor was St. *Peter*, when ſent to preach to him, inſtructed to require of him Obedience to the Law of *Moſes*: And yet in this State God accepted *Cornelius* and his Houſhold, and the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt was poured on them. And St. *Peter*'s Concluſion is, that ſince God accepted *Cornelius* and his Family, without calling them to the Obſervance of the *Moſaic* Law, the Obſervance of the *Moſaic* Law was not a Condition to be impoſed on the *Gentile* Converts.

After St. *Peter*, *Barnabas* and *Paul* gave an Account what Miracles and Wonders God had wrought among the *Gentiles* by them: Which was ſtrengthening St. *Peter*'s Argument, by ſhewing that what had happened in the Caſe of *Cornelius* had alſo happened in many Inſtances during their Miniſtry among the *Gentiles*.

St. *James*, Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*, ſpeaks next: He approves the Reaſoning of St. *Peter*, and ſhews, from the antient Prophecies, that the Call of the *Gentiles* into the Church of Chriſt was, from the Beginning,

ginning, the Deſign of Providence: *Wherefore*, ſays he, *my Opinion is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.*

It is manifeſt that this Reaſoning extends to every Part of the ceremonial Law, and that the *Gentiles* were bound no more by one Point of that Law than by another: And yet we ſhall find that in the Concluſion of the Council ſome Points of the Law of *Moſes* were required to be obſerved in the *Gentile* Churches.

It is one Thing to be bound to obſerve the Law of *Moſes*, as Matter of neceſſary Duty; it is another Thing to comply with ſome Parts of that Law, upon Motives of Chriſtian Charity and Prudence. It was lawful for the *Gentile* Converts to live without obſerving any Part of the Law of *Moſes*; but though *all Things are lawful*, yet, as St. *Paul* ſays, *all Things are not expedient— all Things edify not:* And again, *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worſe*, 1 Cor. viii. 8.

This being the Reaſon of the Caſe, the Circumſtances of the Chriſtian Church of that Time weighed with this Apoſtolical

Council to require of the *Gentile* Converts a Compliance with ſome Particulars of the *Moſaic* Law. St. *James*, who opens this Advice, gives the Reaſon of it: He conſidered, that in all the Cities where *Gentile* Churches had been planted, there were *Jewiſh* Converts likewiſe, who were zealous of the Law, and would hold no Communication with the *Gentiles* who eat Blood, Things ſtrangled, and the like; and therefore, unleſs the *Gentile* Chriſtians complied in ſuch Particulars, there muſt be an irreconcileable Diviſion in the Church of Chriſt, to the Loſs of that Charity, on which the Goſpel ſets ſo great a Price.

St. *James* therefore, after declaring his Opinion that the *Gentile* Converts were not bound by the Law of *Moſes*, propoſes however to write to them *to abſtain from Pollution of Idols, and from Fornication, and from Things ſtrangled, and from Blood:* The Reaſon he gives in theſe Words; *For Moſes of old Time hath in every City*, i. e. in the Cities where *Gentile* Churches were planted, *them that preach him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath.* From whence it is evident, that the Injunctions of the Council to the *Gentile* Converts were founded upon

prudential Conſiderations with reſpect to the *Jews*; and the Matters ordained by the Council were Matters of Diſcipline and Government only. The Paſſage underſtood in this Senſe contains a very ſtrong Argument to juſtify the Decree of the Council; for the *Jews* having been born and bred under the Law of *Moſes*, could not eaſily be perſuaded to depart from it; and therefore, unleſs the *Gentile* Chriſtians could be brought to avoid giving them any Offence, there could be no Hope of Peace in the Chriſtian Church.

The Reaſon upon which the Decree of the Council is founded accounts for the Conduct of St. *Paul* in like Caſes. When he circumciſed *Timothy*, it was becauſe of the *Jews* which were in thoſe Quarters: And when he came to *Jeruſalem*, St. *James* prevailed with him to purify himſelf according to the Uſage of the *Jews*. The Argument made uſe of by St. *James* was the very ſame with that uſed by the Council; *Thou ſeeſt, Brother, how many thouſands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the Law; do therefore this which we ſay to thee, that all may know that thou walkeſt orderly and keepeſt the Law.* This was going a greater

a greater Length than the Council had gone with reſpect to the *Gentiles*, *as touching whom*, St. *James* ſays, *we have written and concluded that they obſerve no ſuch Thing, ſave only that they keep themſelves from Meat offered to Idols, and from Blood, and from Things ſtrangled, and from Fornication.*

There is a Queſtion that ariſes from this Caſe, to know why the Particulars mentioned are ſingled out, when the *Jews* were ſtrongly attached to other Points of the Law.

But, if you conſider the Caſe, the Reaſon for this Diſtinction will evidently appear: For, as the Concern was to prevent the giving Offence to the *Jews*, and thereby to preſerve Peace and Charity in the Church of Chriſt, it was neceſſary to guard againſt the Practices which open to every body's View in the common Occurrences of Life. A *Jew* could never be preſent at the Table of a Chriſtian without having ſome Security that he ſhould not meet with Things offered to Idols, nor with Blood, nor Things ſtrangled; otherwiſe all Intercourſe between them would be cut off: And though St. *James*, upon the Principle of the Council, perſuaded St. *Paul* to purify himſelf, yet that had Relation to St. *Paul*'s particular Circumſtances; and the ſame Advice would

would not have been given to any other Chriſtian who was a *Gentile* Believer; for it was not the Intention of the Council to recommend the Rights and Ceremonies of the Law to the *Gentile* Chriſtians.

But the great Difficulty in this Caſe is to know what is meant by Fornication, which ſeems to be an Offence of a moral Kind, and in which the *Jews* had no particular Concern: How therefore it fell under the Direction of the Council is hard to ſay.

It is certain, that if we underſtood Fornication in the common Senſe of the Word, and as it is vulgarly uſed with us, it can have no Meaning in this Place, it expreſſing a Thing that had no Relation to the Matter under Conſideration of the Council.

In reſpect to Things offered to Idols, and Blood, the *Jews* were not only forbidden the Uſe of them, but were forbidden likewiſe all Communication with thoſe that did uſe them, though they were Strangers, and not bound by the Law of *Moſes*: *I ſaid unto the Children of Iſrael, No Soul of you ſhall eat Blood, neither ſhall any Stranger that ſojourneth among you eat Blood*, Lev. xvii. 12. It is no Wonder therefore that the *Jews*, who were zealous for the Law, thought all Communication forbidden

forbidden with thoſe who allowed themſelves the eating of Blood.

They had the ſame Ground for treating in like Manner thoſe who partook of Meats offered to Idols, which I need not ſpend your Time in proving.

The Word πορνεία, which we tranſlate *Fornication*, has a great Latitude, and includes in it all carnal Impurity: And whoever conſiders the abominable Lewdneſs which made Part of the Worſhip paid to the heathen Idols, will not think it ſtrange to find the Worſhip of Idols and Whoredom joined together in the Decree of the Council. Nor is this peculiar to the Council; for if you look into the Writings of the New Teſtament you will ſee them joined together in like Manner. Thus in the Firſt of the *Corinthians*: *Be not deceived; neither Fornicators nor Idolaters—ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God*, ch. vi. ver. 9. And in the *Revelations* of St. *John*: *But I have a few Things againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to caſt a Stumbling-Block before the Children of Iſrael, to eat Things ſacrificed unto Idols, and to commit Fornication*, ch. ii. ver. 14. And thus, ver. 20. *Notwithſtanding, I have a few Things*

Things againſt thee, becauſe thou ſuffereſt that Woman Jezebel, which calleth herſelf a Propheteſs, to teach and to ſeduce my Servants to commit Fornication, and to eat Things ſacrificed unto Idols. Agreeable to this Notion Idolatry is ſtyled Whoredom in the Old Teſtament; and the great Powers which ſpread Idolatry in the World were characterized under the Image of a great Whore: In which Manner of Speaking the Writers of the Old Teſtament had led the Way; and nobody is at a Loſs to underſtand their Meaning, when they charged the People with going a Whoring after other Gods: And there is as little Reaſon to miſunderſtand the Council; for what more have they done, than to forbid Idolatry, and all the Impurities that attended it?

What has been ſaid in few Words (very few, the Importance of the Subject conſidered) may ſhew us the Foundation and the proper Bounds of Church Authority in Holy Scripture; and they ſhew us at the ſame Time the true Foundation upon which our Reformation from the Church of *Rome* ſtands. If the Church of *Rome* aſks us, why we have departed from ſome Articles, which they account Articles of Faith; our Anſwer is, becauſe they are no Part of *the Faith*

Faith once delivered to the Saints: If they urge us with the Authority of the Church which has received them; our Anſwer is, no Church has, nor have all Churches together, any Authority to make Articles of Faith; that *Chriſt Jeſus was the Author and the Finiſher of the Faith*, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken: If they aſk us, why we have diſcarded much of their Ceremony and Diſcipline; we may, without entering into the Merit of particular Caſes, anſwer, that the the Church of *England* has as much Authority to appoint Rules of Order and Diſcipline for their Members, as the Church of *Rome* has for theirs; that theſe Rules have been ſettled upon prudential Conſiderations of the Circumſtances of *England*, of which the Church of *England* was a far better Judge than the Church of *Rome*. But,

Secondly, If, according to the Apoſtolical Rule in the Text, we are to *contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, the Queſtion will be, where we are to find this Faith, and how to diſtinguiſh it from the Addition of later Ages?

When our Saviour came into the World, the Caſe of the *Jewiſh* Church was in this reſpect

Reſpect the ſame with ours: The Evil had been long growing, and the antient Prophets had taken Notice of it. In the Prophet *Iſaiah* God reproves the Nation for this Crime, That *their Fear towards him was taught by the Precept of Men*, ch. xxix. ver. 13. But yet, notwithſtanding theſe Admonitions, in our Saviour's Time the Traditions were in ſuch Eſteem, that they were appealed to in every Caſe as a deciſive Authority: And the Scribes and Phariſees were ſo ſecure in this Point, that they challenge our Lord to anſwer this Queſtion, *Why do thy Diſciples tranſgreſs the Tradition of the Elders?* Matt. xv. 2. The very Queſtion this, which is daily put to us by the Church of *Rome*, and the darling Point inſiſted on by their Emiſſaries, by which they ſcare ignorant People into a blind Submiſſion to their Authority. But hear our Saviour's Anſwer to the Queſtion, when put to him: *Why do you alſo tranſgreſs the Commandments of God by your Tradition?* A Queſtion hard to be anſwered, and which the great Rulers of the Church of *Rome* ſhould conſider well; for they are much concerned in it.

If the Church of *Rome* pretends to have received by Oral Tradition Doctrines derived

originally from the Apoſtles, the *Jewiſh* Doctors had the ſame Plea, and referred their Traditions up to *Moſes*, from whom, as they ſuppoſe, they received them, by an uninterrupted Succeſſion continued to their own Times.

The *Jews* had the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets, and the Church of *Rome* has the Writings of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts: But neither did the *Jews* allow their Scriptures, nor does the Church of *Rome* allow theirs, to be a complete Rule; but both recur to Tradition to ſupply what they ſuppoſe to be wanting in their ſacred Writings. But now conſider how our bleſſed Saviour treated this Pretence of the *Jewiſh* Church, and it will be a very good Direction to us how to behave in a Caſe which is ſo very much the ſame: He ſpeaks of them as human Inventions; as Doctrines of their own, and not Doctrines of God: *Laying aſide the Commandment of God*, ſays he, *ye hold the Tradition of Men*, Mark vii. 8. And again, ver. 9. *Full well ye reject the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own Tradition.* In the following Verſes he ſhews them how their Tradition contradicted the Law of *Moſes*, and then tells them, *You make*

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the Word of God of none Effect through your Tradition which ye have delivered; manifeſtly conſidering the written Law of *Moſes* as the Commandment of God, and the Traditions of the Elders as the Law of Men, and of their own making.

Moſes and the Prophets make the Scripture of the *Jews*, and to them our Lord conſtantly appeals: He bids the *Jews ſearch the Scriptures*; tells them, *they err, not knowing the Scriptures*; and when the Phariſees put a Queſtion to him concerning Divorce, tempting him, his Anſwer is, *What did Moſes command you?* And when he told the Phariſees, that on the two Commandments, of loving God and our Neighbour, *hang all the Law and the Prophets*, he plainly told them, that the Law and the Prophets contained the whole of their Religion, and that they had no other Rule to go by: For had he conſidered the Traditions of the Elders, as a Rule of Religion, he muſt have reduced them to his general Precepts likewiſe.

In the well-known Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus*, our Saviour has, in the Perſon of *Abraham*, fully determined this Point. The rich Man deſires that *Lazarus* may be ſent from the Dead to warn his

Brethren that they come not to that Place of Torment: *Abraham* refuſes this Requeſt for this Reaſon, Becauſe his Brethren wanted no Means to inſtruct them in the right Way. What was their Rule then? *Abraham* tells him, *They have Moſes and the Prophets; let them hear them.*

The Application of this Caſe is ſo eaſily made to our own, that there is hardly any Reaſon to inſiſt on it particularly. The *Jewiſh* Church had *Moſes* and the Prophets, and abounded with Traditions of their own, taught and received as eſſential to their Religion. What our Saviour thought of their Traditions, what of the Law and the Pro-Prophets, you have heard. The Chriſtian Church likewiſe has the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts; they have alſo too many traditionary Doctrines, which have no Foundation in Holy Writ. What are we to do then? Do we want better Authority than that of our Saviour to reject the Traditions of Men, and to hold faſt the Doctrine of the Apoſtles and Prophets of the Goſpel? that is, as St. *Jude* exhorts us, to *contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XIII.

ROMANS xiii. 1.

Let every Soul be ſubject unto the higher Powers. For there is no Power but of God: The Powers that be are ordained of God.

WE have, in this and the following Verſes, the Duty which Subjects owe to their temporal Governors, both taught and maintained by ſeveral Reaſons and Arguments: The Senſe and Propriety of which Arguments clearly to underſtand, it will be neceſſary for us to conſider the Circumſtances of the Time, and Place, and Perſons here concerned.

There is no Appearance in the Goſpel that our Saviour intended to make any

Alterations in the Civil Governments of the World. He came upon another Errand, of quite a different Nature: He never purpoſely enters upon the Subject of Government, that being no neceſſary Part of his Doctrine; but treats of it only as he was led by particular Occaſions.

In the twenty-ſecond Chapter of St. *Matthew*, we find a captious Queſtion put to him by the Phariſees, Whether it were lawful to pay Tribute to the *Roman* Emperor, or not? The Queſtion aroſe from hence: There was at that Time a Sect among the *Jews*, who held it to be unlawful to pay any Tribute to the *Roman* Emperor, or to yield any Obedience to his Laws. The Author of this Opinion was *Judas* of *Galilee*; who, when the *Roman* Emperor ordered the Nation to be taxed, raiſed upon that Account a great Rebellion; perſuading the People to ſtand by their Liberties, and not to ſubmit to ſuch a Mark of Slavery, as paying of Tribute. The Fate of this Man is related fully by *Joſephus*; and is mentioned likewiſe by *Gamaliel* in *Acts* v. 37. *After this Man roſe up Judas of Galilee, in the Days of the Taxing, and drew away much People after him: He alſo periſhed, and all, even as many as obeyed him,*

him, were diſperſed. But though they were for the preſent diſperſed, yet by Degrees they gathered Strength, and were the Authors of many Troubles; and in the Reign of *Claudius* were ſtrong enough to ravage and deſtroy many Places in *Samaria.* Their Pretence for Freedom was, as we learn from St. *Chryſoſtom*, that they were the Servants of the Lord, and therefore owed no Subjection to any human Creature; that they were the Freemen of God, and ought not therefore to be the Slaves, or the Subjects of Men. This Sect went by the Name of *Galileans*; the Author of it being of that Country, as likewiſe many of his Followers.

Now it is well known that this was a Name by which the Chriſtians went in the firſt Ages: They are mentioned under this Name by ſeveral Heathen Writers; and that it was in Uſe among all who ſpoke contemptuouſly of Chriſt and his Religion, even ſo late as in *Julian*'s Time, we learn from his Writings ſtill remaining, where he often ſpeaks of the Chriſtians under the Name of *Galileans.* And hence it came to paſs, that the Chriſtians going by the Name of *Galileans* were generally thought by the Heathens to entertain the ſame Opinions with the Sect of

that Name; that is, they were taken to be Men of ſeditious Principles, who refuſed Obedience to earthly Princes, and were for ſetting up an independent Government of their own. Thus when *Tertullus* the Orator accuſes St. *Paul*, he charges him with being *a peſtilent Fellow, a Mover of Sedition among all the Jews throughout the World, and a Ring-leader of the Sect of the Nazarens*, Acts xxiv. 5. Of this Calumny we find the unbelieving *Jews* alſo making their Advantage againſt the Chriſtians; for thus they accuſe them to the Magiſtrates of *Theſſalonica*, *Theſe who have turned the World upſide down are come hither alſo*, Acts xvii. 6.

Upon this Ground then it was that the Phariſees put that inſidious Queſtion to our Saviour, *Is it lawful to pay Tribute to Cæſar?* hoping, no Doubt, to have found ſomething whereof to have impeached him before the *Roman* Governor. The Collectors of Tax ſeem likewiſe to have had the ſame Jealouſy concerning our Saviour, when in the ſeventeenth of St. *Matthew* they inquire of St. *Peter*, whether his Maſter would pay Tribute, or no? for it is probable by their Queſtion that they took our Lord for one of the new Teachers, who ſet up in Defiance

to the *Roman* Emperor: To which St. *Peter* anſwers, *Yes.* And our Saviour, though he intimates that he ought to have been exempted from paying Tribute, yet, knowing what Suſpicions there were concerning him, and what Uſe would have been made of his Refuſal, orders St. *Peter* to go to the Sea, and caſt an Hook, and take the Fiſh that ſhould come up, and open his Mouth, where he ſhould find a Piece of Money: That take, ſays he, and give them as Tribute for me and yourſelf, *leſt we ſhould offend them.*

Now, though our Saviour's Buſineſs was not either to limit or to enlarge the Civil Governments of the World, yet this Scandal which he and his Diſciples lay under, urged both him and them to vindicate themſelves, and to teach their Followers ſuch Obedience and Submiſſion to the higher Powers, as might leave no Pretence for ſuch an Accuſation: Accordingly our Saviour having drawn a Confeſſion from the Phariſees, that the Tribute-Money belonged to *Cæſar*, anſwers, that they ſhould *render to Cæſar the Things which were Cæſar's.*

That the Apoſtles likewiſe had reference to the ſame Scandal in preſſing Obedience of all Kinds upon their Diſciples, whether

conſidered

conſidered as Subjects, or Servants, or Wives, or Children, is evident from hence, that they almoſt always cloſe their Inſtructions of this Sort with this Argument, *That the Word of God be not blaſphemed* or *evil ſpoken of:* An Argument which in its own Nature has no nearer Relation to civil Obedience than to any other good Work; and it is as proper to exhort Men to Temperance and Sobriety, to Charity, and other the like Virtues, that no Scandal may be brought on the Goſpel, as it is to exhort them to Obedience to their Superiors. This Motive therefore being almoſt ever urged in the Caſe of Obedience, ſhews plainly that the Chriſtians were liable to Reproach in this Caſe more than any other. Our Lord bids St. *Peter* pay the Tribute, *leſt*, ſays he, *we ſhould offend them:* And thus St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to *Titus*, ch. ii. ver. 5. orders *Titus* to admoniſh *Wives to be obedient to their own Huſbands, that the Word of God be not blaſphemed*; and, ver. 10. to exhort *Servants to be obedient to their own Maſters, and to pleaſe them well in all Things, that they may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things:* So likewiſe in the firſt Epiſtle to *Timothy*, ch. vi. ver. 1. the Apoſtle gives this Exhortation, *Let as many*

many Servants as are under the Yoke count their own Maſters worthy of all Honour; and then he repeats the forementioned Reaſon, *That the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blaſphemed*: Thus likewiſe St. *Peter*, preſſing Obedience to Governors, gives this Reaſon for it, *For ſo is the Will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to Silence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men*, 1 Pet. ii. 15. that is, of ſuch Men as ſcandalize the Doctrine of the Goſpel, as if it taught us to claim a Freedom inconſiſtent with the Obedience that Subjects and Servants and Children owed to their reſpective Superiors: And, with regard to this abuſed Notion of Chriſtian Freedom, the Apoſtle adds, in the very next Verſe, *As free, and not uſing your Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciouſneſs, but as the Servants of God.* Beſides theſe Reaſons, drawn from the Apoſtles' own Writings, to ſhew with what View they ſo frequently inſiſted upon, and inculcated Obedience of all Kinds, we have to the ſame Purpoſe the expreſs Authority of St. *Jerom* and St. *Chryſoſtom*. St. *Jerom*, in his Comment upon the Epiſtle to *Titus*, at theſe Words, *Put them in Mind to be ſubject to Principalities and Powers*, gives this Reaſon why the Apoſtle there, and elſewhere, inſiſts

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on the Obligations which Chriſtians were under to obey their Rulers: *Quia Judæ Galilæi per illud tempus dogma adhuc vigebat, et habebat plurimos ſectatores—Becauſe the Doctrine of Judas of Galilee yet prevailed at that Time, and had many Followers.* St. *Chryſoſtom*, in his Comment upon the thirteenth of the *Romans*, teaches us the ſame Thing: Καὶ γὰρ πολὺς περιεφέρετο λόγος τότε, ἐπὶ φάσει καὶ καινοτομίᾳ διαβάλλων τὺς ἀποστόλυς, καὶ ὡς ἐπ' ἀνατροπῇ τῶν κοινῶν νόμων, ἅπαντα καὶ ποιῶνλαι καὶ λέγονλαι—*For there was at that Time a ſtrong Report that the Apoſtles were ſeditious and Innovators, and that their Principles and Practices tended to the Subverſion of the common Laws.*

From this Account it is eaſy to ſee what made the Apoſtles ſo frequently, ſo earneſtly preſs their new Converts to ſhew a more than ordinary Obedience to their Maſters and Governors: The Honour of Chriſt and the Goſpel was nearly concerned in their Behaviour, which ought to be dearer to them than their Lives, and to outweigh all other Conſiderations whatever; and therefore they ought to bear every thing rather than give any Umbrage to the Enemies of the Goſpel, by pretending upon any Account, how

how plauſible ſoever, to withſtand the Commands of their lawful Governors. And for this Reaſon St. *Paul* more eſpecially labours the Point, when he writes to the Chriſtians at *Rome*, which was the ordinary Reſidence of the Emperor, and where any the leaſt Diſorder would be the ſooneſt taken Notice of, and moſt improved to the Prejudice of the Goſpel. And if you examine what St. *Paul* has taught concerning Obedience and Subjection to the higher Powers, you will find it anſwer exactly to theſe Circumſtances now ſet before you, and to be built upon Reaſons purpoſely adapted to convince the Error of the *Galileans* and ſome judaizing Chriſtians, and to require ſuch an exact and ſcrupulous Obedience, as might clear the Goſpel and its Profeſſors from the Scandal thrown on them by the Heathen World.

Let every Soul, ſays he, *be ſubject unto the higher Powers.* This is the Doctrine laid down in oppoſition to ſuch as taught that there were no higher Powers who had any Claim to their Obedience, but that they were under the immediate Government of God, and therefore owed no Subjection to Man. The Apoſtle ſupports his Doctrine with Arguments peculiarly adapted to combat the Error

Error he oppoſes, as you will perceive in the following Words: *For there is no Power*, ſays he, *but of God: The Powers that be are ordained of God.* As if he had ſaid, You argue that you ought to be ſubject to God only, and to acknowledge no other Power or Authority but his. What you ſay is true: But ſo far is this Reaſon from exempting you from the Subjection to temporal Power, that, well conſidered, it will prove juſt the contrary: For the Power of the Magiſtrate is a Power delegated from God, and therefore more eſpecially to be regarded by thoſe who pretend in a peculiar Manner to be the Servants of God. It was obvious to object againſt this Reaſoning, That the Powers then in being could not be the Powers ordained by God, becauſe they ſo evidently thwarted all his Purpoſes: They had put to death the Lord of Life; they perſecuted his Followers; they were the Supporters of Superſtition and Idolatry, and the main Obſtacle in the Way of the Goſpel: To prevent which Surmiſes the Apoſtle purpoſely adds, *The Powers which be*, αἱ δὲ οὖσαι ἐξουσίαι, the Powers which *now be*, are ordained of God. From theſe Poſitions he draws the Conſequence in direct oppoſition to the Principles

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and Practices of thoſe who were Deſpiſers of Government: *Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the Power reſiſteth the Ordinance of God.* To reſiſt the Ordinance of God was certainly inconſiſtent with their Profeſſion who pretended to dedicate themſelves to the Obedience of God; and ſo entirely, that for that Reaſon they would own no Obedience to any one elſe, leſt they ſhould ſeem to ſet up another to ſhare with God in his Right to their Service. The Apoſtle ſo far allows their Principle, as to argue from it, and ſhews them, that they cannot reſiſt the civil Power conſiſtently with their Reſolutions of obeying God; becauſe ſubmitting to our earthly Princes is Part of the Obedience which God requires from us. If we inquire in what particular Senſe the Rulers of the World may be ſaid to be the Ordinance of God, and to derive their Power and Authority from him; we ſhall find that the State of the World requires that there ſhould be ſome to rule, inveſted with Power to protect the Innocent, and to defend the Weak from the Violence of the Oppreſſor: And therefore Government is agreeable to the Will of God; and to pretend an Exemption from it would be acting in op-

poſition to his Will and the Order of his Eſtabliſhment.

As ſome pretended to withdraw their Obedience from the Prince, becauſe they had been made Partakers of the Freedom of the Goſpel; ſo others, who were in a State of Servitude, thought they had a Right to throw off their Bondage, ſuppoſing a State of Slavery to be inconſiſtent with the Liberty of the Goſpel of Chriſt: They went upon the ſame Reaſon which the others did, and pleaded their Relation to God and Chriſt as a full Releaſe from the Condition of Slaves. The Apoſtle therefore uſes the ſame Way of arguing to them, and exhorts them to yield Obedience to their Maſters as unto the Lord, as unto God; ſhewing them that their Maſters, with reſpect to temporal Affairs, ſtood in the Place of God; and they were therefore to ſubmit unto them as unto God. Thus in the ſeventh Chapter of the firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* the Apoſtle lays down this general Rule, *Let every Man abide in the ſame Calling wherein he is called*; that is, as he explains himſelf, whether he be Servant, or whether he be free, let him not think that his Condition is repugnant to his Religion: If he be Servant, let him ſo

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continue. *Servants*, ſays he, in the ſixth of the *Epheſians*, *be obedient unto them that are your Maſters according to the Fleſh, with Fear and Trembling, in Singleneſs of your Heart, as unto Chriſt; not with Eye-ſervice, as Men-pleaſers, but as the Servants of Chriſt, doing the Will of God from the Heart; with Good-Will doing Service, as to the Lord, and not to Men.* The ſame is repeated, with ſome ſmall Variety of Expreſſion, in the third of the *Coloſſians:* And in 1 *Tim.* vi. he treats of this Matter with ſome Warmth, and affirms, that this Doctrine of Obedience is the Law of God, and that whoever denies it *conſents not to wholeſome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godlineſs; but is proud, knowing nothing, doting about Queſtions and Strife of Words—ſuppoſing Gain to be Godlineſs.* In all which it is plain he refers to the Opinion of ſuch as taught that the Goſpel had introduced a perfect State of Freedom, diſſolving all the antient Ties between Maſters and Servants: In oppoſition to which, he teaches them, that their being Chriſtians ſhould make them better, not worſe Servants; for that they ought to obey from the Heart, as ſerving God, and not

Men. St. *Peter* likewiſe uſes the ſame Argument with the ſame View: *Submit yourſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake.* Hence then it is plain, that the Apoſtle's Argument is directed againſt thoſe principally, who were for diſſolving all the Obligations between the Prince and the Subject; who were for making Religion the Cloak of Diſloyalty, and for throwing down all Power and Authority of earthly Princes, upon the ſpecious Pretence of ſetting up the Lord Jeſus. And therefore, as to the Original of the Prince's Power, we may, upon the Apoſtle's Word, aſſert it to be divine, as being derived immediately from God, and uſed and exerciſed in his Name, and by his Authority.

To proceed: The Apoſtle uſes a ſecond Argument to enforce his Doctrine laid down at firſt in the Words of the Text, *Let every Soul be ſubject to the higher Powers.* And here the firſt Doubt is, where the Argument begins; for the Words immediately following thoſe laſt treated of may either be taken as the firſt of the ſecond Argument, or as a further Concluſion drawn from the firſt: *And they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves Damnation.* If they who reſiſt the Power

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do reſiſt the Ordinance of God, it may certainly be affirmed by evident Conſequence, that they who reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves Damnation; ſo evident a Conſequence, that it can loſe nothing of its Force, though theſe Words ſhould not be underſtood to contain it, but ſhould be taken as introducing a new Argument, as upon the whole I incline to think they ought to be taken. For the Words immediately following contain a Reaſon of ſomething going before; *For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil:* But this will not prove that all who reſiſt ſhall be damned; for Rulers are not the Judges in the Caſe of Damnation: But if we underſtand the Apoſtle in theſe Words, *All who reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves Damnation*, as entering upon a new Topic, and ſetting forth the certain evil Conſequences which even in this Life ſhould attend the Seditious, who would render themſelves juſtly obnoxious to the Powers of the World, and be liable to their Cenſure, it then very properly follows, *For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to evil.*

To ſhew that the Language in the Original admits of this Senſe, or that the preſent Diviſion of Verſes is no Authority on

one Side or the other, is a Labour I may well ſave myſelf in this Audience. Let us go on then to conſider the Argument: It is drawn from the common Topic of Hope and Fear, and repreſents to us the Danger of diſobeying our Governors, by ſetting before us not only their Power, but their Right and their Duty to puniſh, when we refuſe to acknowledge their Authority: And, by ſhewing the Prince's Duty to puniſh ſuch Offenders, in conſequence of the Commiſſion given him by God, it tacitly warns us to expect no Protection from God againſt the juſt Anger and Indignation of our Princes; ſince in puniſhing the ſtubborn Offenders they do but execute the Will and Command of God: In which Caſe it is abſurd to depend upon any Aſſiſtance or Protection from him, in oppoſition to his own Authority delegated to earthly Powers.

The Goſpel does, in every Page, encourage its Diſciples to bear up againſt the Afflictions of the World, to rejoice when they are perſecuted and evil intreated, and to be exceeding glad, becauſe their Reward ſhall be great in Heaven: But, leſt thoſe who ſuffered as ſeditious Subjects ſhould entertain themſelves with theſe Hopes, the Apoſtle takes care to repreſent

repreſent the Prince as acting by the Will and Power of God, in puniſhing ſuch Offenders. What Fruit then could thoſe Sufferings yield, which were not only the Effect of Man's Wrath, but alſo of the Juſtice of God? St. *Peter*, on the ſame Subject, has evidently the ſame View before him: *If ye be reproached*, ſays he, *for the Name of Chriſt, happy are ye; for the Spirit of Glory and of God reſteth on you—But let none of you ſuffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an evil Doer:* For, as he had before obſerved, *What Glory is it, if when ye ſhall be buffeted for your Faults ye take it patiently?*

St. *Paul*'s ſecond Argument therefore is not a mere prudential Motive to Obedience, ſhewing us what may probably be expected from an angry Governor; but goes further, and teaches that we ſhall not only ſuffer, but alſo deſerve to ſuffer; which every Chriſtian ought rather to fear than the Evil itſelf. The particular Steps of the Argument are as follow: *They that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves Damnation*, i. e. Puniſhment, or Judgment. The Reaſon follows: *For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil.* It is plain here, from the Force of the Inference, that, by *good Works*,

Obedience is eſpecially meant; and, by *evil Works*, Reſiſtance; for otherwiſe the Apoſtle's Reaſon will not contain the Proof of his Doctrine: For it is not certain that thoſe who reſiſt ſhall be puniſhed, becauſe Rulers are a Terror to evil Works, unleſs Reſiſtance be meant, or included, in evil Works: And yet the Apoſtle is now diſputing with thoſe who thought the Goſpel juſtified them in not ſubmitting to their Governors, and who could not therefore think the Reſiſtance here ſpoken of an evil Work. Does he then beg this Point, of all others in this Controverſy the moſt material? No: But he builds on the Strength of his firſt Argument, where he had ſhewn, that whoever reſiſts the Power reſiſteth the Ordinance of God; which is enough to prove Reſiſtance an evil Work: Which being proved, he goes on to ſhew the Prince's Power over ſuch Workers of Iniquity: *Wilt thou then*, ſays he, *not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have Praiſe of the ſame.* This was a ſtrange Aſſertion, if underſtood of good Works in general: St. *Paul* knew ſurely, that to obey the Goſpel, to reject Idolatry, to renounce the polluted Feaſts of the *Gentiles*, was to do good; yet he knew that

that thoſe who did ſo, far from having the Praiſe of the Rulers, were daily puniſhed and tormented by them: He knew that to preach the Goſpel was a good Work; and yet he knew that he for ſo doing had been in Perils often, in Bonds and Impriſonments, and in Danger of his Life. How then could he aſſure his Converts, that if they did that which was good they ſhould have Praiſe of their Rulers, when they felt the contrary every Day? But this Difficulty vaniſhes, if we take *Good* in that limited Senſe in which the Apoſtle uſes it: *Rulers*, ſays he, *are not a Terror to good Works, but to evil.* It naturally follows, *Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have Praiſe of the ſame.* It is evident, by the Courſe of Reaſoning, that the *Good* in the latter Part of the Verſe muſt mean the ſame Thing with *good Works* in the firſt Part; and I obſerved before, that the Apoſtle's Argument neceſſarily required that, by *good Works*, we ſhould eſpecially underſtand the Work of *Obedience:* Conſequently, when the Apoſtle ſays, *Do that which is good*, his Meaning is, *Pay due Obedience.* And then his Propoſition is univerſally true: For Obedience is a good Work; and, let Princes be what they will, they will always

praiſe and encourage Obedience: Which is one good Reaſon for obeying, in all Caſes, as far as we can; for we are ſure to get this by it, a quiet Life, at leaſt.

Beſides, this Expoſition ſuits with St. *Paul*'s main Deſign; which was to inculcate Obedience to the higher Power. What other Good then could he properly recommend on this Subject? Temperance, Chaſtity, Charity, and all other Virtues, were out of this Queſtion: Obedience was the Thing doubted of. If the Apoſtle then keeps to his Point, the good Thing he recommends muſt needs be the Good of Obedience; and the Word in the Original, which is rendered by the Word *Good* in our Tranſlation, is appropriated both by St. *Paul* and St. *Peter* to denote the Good of Obedience, in oppoſition to the evil Spirit which ſet a Government at nought. The Promiſe made to Obedience is in theſe Words, *Thou ſhalt have Praiſe of the ſame.* What is meant by *Praiſe*, may be underſtood by the parallel Place in St. *Peter*, who ſpeaks of Governors ſent *for the Puniſhment of evil Doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well:* Where Praiſe, being oppoſed to Puniſhment, muſt denote Protection and Encouragement; which are the only proper

proper Rewards which good Subjects can expect from their Governors: And ſo it ſignifies in the Place before us. And this will help us to underſtand the following Words: *For he is the Miniſter of God to thee for Good.* The Apoſtle had promiſed *Reward* to the Obedient: He ſupports it by this Reaſon; For he, the Ruler, is *the Miniſter of God to thee for Good.* To be a Miniſter for Good then, muſt denote his being appointed by God as a Diſpenſer of Rewards; or elſe the Argument is lame: For, if any other Good be meant, the Conſequence is falſe; for it does not follow, that the Obedient ſhall be rewarded, becauſe the Prince is a Miniſter of ſome other Good; which is no Way related to rewarding the Good: But, if he be appointed by God to diſpenſe Rewards to thoſe who do well, and if Obedience be the good Work, I have then good Reaſon to expect Reward for my Obedience.

And this Senſe will appear undeniably to be the true one, by comparing the former and latter Part of the Verſe together: For the Apoſtle goes on, *But if thou do that which is evil be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain.* Then he adds the very

ſame Argument which he had uſed before; *For he is the Miniſter of God:* A Miniſter for what? He had before, where he treated of him as a Diſpenſer of Rewards, called him a Miniſter of God for Good: Here he ſpeaks of him as a Diſpenſer of Puniſhment; he ſhould therefore have called him a Miniſter of God *for Evil:* But that was too harſh an Expreſſion; and therefore he uſes a Periphraſis inſtead of it: For he is the Miniſter of God, *a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.* This ſhews us how to expound his being a Miniſter for Good, that is, a Protector and Encourager to him that doth well. Compare all the Parts, and I think there can be no Doubt. The Evil are threatened: Why? Becauſe the Ruler is the Miniſter of God? The Miniſter, to what Purpoſe? He tells you: A Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil. On the other Side, the Obedient are encouraged to expect Reward: Why? For the ſame Reaſon; becauſe the Ruler is a Miniſter of God for this Purpoſe alſo: And, conſequently, a Miniſter for Good muſt denote a Diſpenſer of Good to him that doth Good.

What

What Good we are to expect from Kings and Governors St. *Paul* has told us; requiring that we ſhould *pray for Kings, and for all that are in Authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty*, 1 Tim. ii. 2. The Peace and Quiet of Society is the very End of temporal Government; and, when it is duly promoted by thoſe in Authority, then have they a juſt Claim to be eſteemed as Miniſters of God for Good to the People; who, in Return for this Good received of the Prince, are bound on their Part to yield Obedience and Submiſſion; which is the Thing will intitle them to the Praiſe and Protection of thoſe in Authority over them.

Theſe are the two Arguments by which St. *Paul* ſupports his Doctrine of Obedience: That I have rightly divided them he himſelf ſhall bear Witneſs, who in the next Verſe ſums up his Reaſoning in theſe Words; *for) Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only (Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience ſake.* You ſee he refers to two Arguments, and two only: One drawn from Wrath, one from Conſcience. The Argument from Wrath reſpects the preſent Life and the Magiſtrate's Power: For the Wrath of God is included

in the Argument from Conſcience, which indeed is no Argument without it; for what is Conſcience, where there is no Fear of God? You muſt then ſubmit for Wrath, becauſe the Magiſtrate has the Power of God to execute Wrath on him that doth Evil: You muſt ſubmit for Conſcience; for he that reſiſteth the Power reſiſteth the Ordinance of God. The ſixth Verſe contains no new Argument; but mentions a particular Inſtance of Obedience, the paying Tribute; which is therefore particularly mentioned, becauſe, as I before obſerved, it was the very Ground of this Diſpute.

I have but one Thing more to obſerve upon St. *Paul*, which is, that under the Duties of Subjection he comprehends not only thoſe owing to Kings and Princes, but thoſe owing to every Superior, nay, thoſe owing even to our Equals: *Render*, ſays he, *to all their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom; Fear to whom Fear; Honour to whom Honour*; and concludes with this general Exhortation, *Owe no Man any Thing, but to love one another*; referring even the Duties of Love to this Head of Subjection. I mention this now for the Uſe I ſhall make of it hereafter.

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It is plain that the Apoſtle's Concern was with ſuch as denied even the Right of Government, and were for being every Man his own King: It was not therefore before him to conſider diſtinctly the Meaſures and Limits of the Power of earthly Princes; nor can the Argument be extended to reach this Point. He aſſerts the Magiſtrate to be ordained of God, and the Rulers Power to be the Ordinance of God: But it will not from hence appear what are the Limits of this Power; for all Power ordained by God is not infinite, nor of the ſame Extent. All our natural Powers are ordained by God, and he has divided to every Man as ſeemeth beſt to him. The leaſt Power is his Ordinance, as well as the greateſt: And therefore the Extent of Power cannot appear from this, that it is the Ordinance of God; ſince all Power, whether great or little, is ordained by him. Nor has the Scripture, that I know of, ever meddled with this Point: It has commanded Obedience to all Governors, and left us the Laws and Conſtitutions of our Country to know who they are, and what they are.

The Apoſtle, in teaching this Doctrine, was chiefly concerned for the Honour of the Goſpel;

Goſpel; and exhorted to Obedience, that the Name of God and of Chriſt might not be blaſphemed. Had St. *Paul* taught the Chriſtians at *Rome*, that the Emperor was ordained by God for their Good, and that they were bound to obey him as long as he was good to them, and no longer; would this, do you think, have cleared them of the Scandal they lay under of being Enemies to Government? Would they have had *Praiſe* of the Power for this Doctrine? No: It would rather have juſtified all the Reproaches caſt on them, and confirmed the Powers of the World in the Opinion, that, if ever Chriſtianity prevailed, their Authority muſt ſink.

I cannot conclude my Diſcourſe without taking notice of St. *Peter*'s Doctrine upon this Subject. His Epiſtle is directed to the Strangers ſcattered throughout divers Countries: For in the ninth Year of the Emperor *Claudius*, the *Jews*, under which Name the Chriſtians were comprehended, as is plain from the eighteenth of the *Acts*, were baniſhed *Rome* for Tumults and Seditions occaſioned by their Diſputes. This Baniſhment is mentioned by *Suetonius*, and the Writer of the *Acts* in the Place laſt quoted. St.

Peter,

Peter therefore, in his Epiſtle, was neceſſarily to mention and preſs Obedience, the Want of which had occaſioned their preſent Diſtreſs. Thus then he exhorts his ſcattered Flock: *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts which war againſt the Soul, having your Converſation honeſt among the Gentiles; that whereas they ſpeak againſt you as evil Doers;* that is, as diſobedient Subjects, which is alſo, as I ſhewed, St. *Paul*'s Notion of evil Doers; *they may by your good Works, which they behold, glorify God in the Day of Viſitation.* Then follows the general Precept: *Submit yourſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake*; whether it be to the King, or to Governors; and the like *.

Here

* If we compare St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* together, and conſider the Subject they were upon, we ſhall find it neceſſary to take the τὸ ἀγαθὸν in the reſtrained Senſe here mentioned: For what other Good could they mean, conſiſtently with their Argument and their Subject? for the only evil Thing which they had to contend with was an Oppoſition to all Government in general; the Good therefore they would recommend was neceſſarily to be Submiſſion in general. In the ſame reſtrained Senſe St. *Peter* ſometimes uſes καλὸν, ch. ii. ver. 12, &c. ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν, ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύσαντες, δοξάσωσι τὸν Θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς. At ver. 15. and at ver. 20. it plainly appears that ἀγαθοποιῶν is equivalent to καλοποιεῖν, and

Here then St. *Peter* is ſuppoſed to have determined the great Point, and taught us that Kings are the Ordinance of Man, made by the People: If he has, I am ſure he has contradicted St. *Paul*, who has expreſly told us, that *the Powers which be are ordained of God:* Which clear Doctrine of St. *Paul* ſhould, I think, make us cautious how we expound St. *Peter* to a different Meaning. St. *Peter*'s original Words are πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει. How they came to be rendered *to every Ordinance of Man*, I profeſs myſelf not to underſtand. Κτίσις ſignifies ſometimes in Scripture *a Creature*, and the Adjective joined with it ſignifies *human*: According to which St. *Peter*'s Doctrine is plain; Submit yourſelves to every human Creature, or to every Man, for the Lord's Sake. How κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη ſhould ſignify a Creature, or any thing elſe made by Man, I know not: Ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία is not Wiſdom

and that both Expreſſions mean a general Submiſſion to Government. We meet with the ſame Word again in the Courſe of the Argument, ch. iii. ver. 5, &c. where St. *Peter* having mentioned the Duty of Submiſſion, which *Sarah* paid to *Abraham*, exhorts Wives to follow her Example, whoſe Daughters they were, ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι; which he explains by ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσι. So that there can be no Doubt of the Uſe of the Word in this Place.

made

made by Man, but the Wiſdom which Man has, given him by God: So κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη is not a Creature made by Man, but *an human Creature:* And that this is St. *Peter*'s true Meaning will appear from the whole Tenor of his Diſcourſe. It is uſual with the beſt Writers to ſet down the Doctrine in general Words, and then to deduce the Particulars: This is St. *Peter*'s Method in the Place before us: Submit, ſays he, yourſelves to every human Creature. This is the general Point. He immediately deſcends to Particulars: He begins with the King, as ſupreme; goes from him to Governors appointed by him: At the eighteenth Verſe he comes to Servants, whom he commands to be ſubject to their Maſters with all Fear: When he has done with them, he goes to Wives, ordering them to be in Subjection to their own Huſbands. All theſe Particulars are plainly included in the general Rule: And, conſequently, there is as much Reaſon to ſay, from St. *Peter*, that the Huſband of every Woman is made by the People, as that the King of every Country is: Nay, St. *Peter* goes lower; and, as a Precept deducible from his general Rule, he commands us to love the Brotherhood: So that I may

as well ſay that I made my Brother, becauſe I muſt love him, as that I made my King, becauſe I muſt obey him. I obſerved to you before how St. *Paul* derived the Duties of Subjection ſo low as to the Love of one another: St. *Peter*, you ſee, does the ſame. St. *Paul*'s general Rule is, ch. xiii. ver. 7. *Render to all their Dues:* St. *Peter*'s is, *Submit to every human Creature.* St. *Paul* concludes, ver. 8. *Owe no Man any thing but to love one another:* St. *Peter*, ch. v. ver. 5. *Yea, all of you be ſubject one to another.* You ſee the ſame Reaſoning in both, that both take in all Degrees of Duty into the Doctrine of Submiſſion.

You ſee how nearly the Apoſtles agree: If St. *Paul* has ſaid, that the higher Powers are ordained of God; has not St. *Peter* ſaid as much, by telling us, that ſo is the Will of God, that with well-doing we may put to Silence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men? If St. *Paul* has ſaid, we muſt obey for Conſcience ſake; are we not under the ſame Obligation, by knowing, from St. *Peter*, that Obedience is the Will of God?

The Commentators have given themſelves unneceſſary Trouble, in inquiring into the Characters

Characters of the Princes at the Time theſe Epiſtles were written; for the Diſpute was with thoſe who rejected all Sorts of Government, whether they were under good or bad Princes: With the temporal Rights of Princes they meddled not. St. *Peter*, who wrote to the Diſperſed in *Aſia*, where the Governments had always been deſpotic, exhorted them, in the firſt Place, to due Obedience to the King, and then to thoſe who were put in Authority under him: Whereas St. *Paul*, in writing to the *Romans*, where the Form of Government was not fully eſtabliſhed, being in the Hands of the Emperor, ſometimes with and ſometimes without the Concurrence of the Senate, made choice of an Expreſſion that has avoided that Difficulty, and directs Obedience to be paid to the higher Powers, without determining who they were; which was a Point in which he had no Right to interpoſe his Authority.

I ſhall leave this Subject without drawing any Conſequences, excepting one only, for the Sake of which I entered into this Inquiry; namely, That the Scriptures are not to be tortured to ſpeak in favour of one

Side or another; for they ſtand clear of all Diſputes about the Rights of Princes and Subjects: So that ſuch Diſputes muſt be left to be decided by Principles of natural Equity and the Conſtitutions of the Country.

DISCOURSE XIV.

GENESIS xviii. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Houſhold after him; and they ſhall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath ſpoken of him.

THE Words of the Text are the Words of the Lord concerning *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful; and they contain the Reaſon why the Lord made Choice of *Abraham*, to diſtinguiſh him from the reſt of the World, to make of him *a great and mighty Nation*, a Nation to whom ſhould be *committed the Oracles of God*. *Abraham*, ſays the Lord in the Verſe

before the Text, *ſhall ſurely become a great and mighty Nation; and all the Nations of the Earth ſhall be bleſſed in him.*

It has been Matter of great Difficulty with curious Inquirers to aſſign the Reaſons of God's particular Regard to *Abraham* and his Poſterity, to whom he made himſelf known in a very particular Manner; whilſt the reſt of the Nations of the Earth were permitted to continue in Ignorance and Superſtition. I intend not to examine all the Reaſons that have, or may be aſſigned for this Diſpenſation of Providence; but, ſince God himſelf has been pleaſed to give one Reaſon for his particular Regard to *Abraham*, it highly concerns us to conſider it, as holding forth to us the very beſt Inſtruction by what Means we may render ourſelves acceptable to God, and draw down a Bleſſing upon ourſelves and our Poſterity: *Abraham ſhall ſurely become a great and mighty Nation; and all the Nations of the Earth ſhall be bleſſed in him: For I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Houſhold after him; and they ſhall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath ſpoken of him.*

You

You ſee now the Connection of the Text with the Verſe that goes before it, and the Reaſon given for the diſtinguiſhing Mercy beſtowed on *Abraham*: God ſaw that *Abraham* would ſo rule and govern his Children and his Houſhold, as to make them keep the Way of the Lord, and do Juſtice and Judgment; and therefore he determined to raiſe him into *a great and mighty Nation*. This Reaſon is plainly founded on theſe two Propoſitions, and ſuppoſes the Truth of them, *viz.* Firſt, That it is the Duty of every Father and Maſter of a Family ſo to command his Children and Houſhold that they ſhall keep the Way of the Lord: And, Secondly, That the ſame Duty is incumbent on the Governors and Magiſtrates of all Nations. If you ſuppoſe that the Virtue commended in *Abraham* is proper only to Fathers and Maſters of Families, and has no Relation to the Duty of a public Magiſtrate, the Reaſon given in the Text for making *Abraham a great and mighty Nation* is a very abſurd one: For, if the Magiſtrate has nothing to do to command the Obſervance of the Ways of the Lord, *Abraham*'s Diſpoſition ſo to govern and command could be no Reaſon for making him the

Head of a great Nation: Nay, it would rather be a very good Reaſon to keep all public Authority out of his Hands: For, if the Magiſtrate tranſgreſſes the Limits of his Authority, whenever he uſes his Authority for the Preſervation of Religion, to raiſe a Man to be the Head of a Nation becauſe you foreſee he will ſo uſe his Authority, is to raiſe him to be a Magiſtrate becauſe you foreſee he will tranſgreſs the Limits of his Commiſſion. Since then God has declared that he raiſed *Abraham* to be a great Nation, becauſe he foreſaw that he would command thoſe under his Authority to keep the Way of the Lord, he has at the ſame Time declared it to be the Duty of every Magiſtrate ſo to command and govern the Nation, the great Family committed to his Care, that the Ways of the Lord, that Juſtice and Judgment may be obſerved.

It has been Matter of great Diſpute, whether Government is derived from the Paternal Authority, and is only the Extenſion of it, or from the Conſent and Choice of the People: A Point of greater Curioſity than Uſe; ſince the Rights of Nations will be determined by their reſpective Laws and Uſages, and not by the Speculations of Philoſophers,

loſophers. But, as to the Caſe of Virtue and Religion, it is evident, that every Magiſtrate's Duty, with reſpect to his People, is the ſame with that which every Father naturally has with reſpect to his Children and Houſhold. *Abraham* was therefore to be made a great and mighty Nation becauſe he would command his Children and Houſehold to keep the Way of the Lord: A manifeſt Proof that the Care and Command which he exerciſed as Father of the Family was proper to be extended to whole Nations; otherwiſe this Care over his Family could be no Reaſon for extending his Authority over a great and mighty Nation. And indeed the Magiſtrate's Care with reſpect to the Religion of his People, and the Father's with reſpect to the Religion of his Family, are ſo much the ſame, that they muſt neceſſarily ſtand or fall together; for both have the ſame Reaſons to ſupport them, and both are equally liable to the ſame Objections. If the Father of a Family has his Authority from God, and rules over not only his own Children, but the Servants and Creatures of the Almighty, and ought therefore to have a Concern for God and Religion, is the Caſe of the Magiſtrate different? Are not his

Subjects

Subjects also the Creatures and Servants of God? and is he not the Minister and Vicegerent of God, and therefore bound, in the first Place, to have Regard to his Honour, who is the common Master of him and of his Servants? If the Happiness of a Family, and of every Member of it, consists in a due Conformity to the Principles of Virtue and Reason, and it be therefore the Father's Duty, even out of natural Affection to his Children, to guard them against Vice and Immorality, is the Happiness of a Kingdom, and the Members of it, less concerned in the Virtue of the People? or ought a Prince less to regard the Welfare and Prosperity of his People? Turn it which Way you will, the Arguments are still the same, and equally applicable to both Cases.

If you object to the Magistrate's Authority in Religion, that temporal Rewards and Punishments are improper to be employed in the Cause of Religion; are they not equally improper in the Hands of a Father, as of a Prince? If the Subjects have Reason to direct them, and ought therefore to be left to themselves in all Matters of Conscience; are not your Sons and your Daughters reasonable Creatures too? and have they not the

the ſame Plea to make to exempt them from the Authority of a Father? If Religion be ſomething internal, and of which the Magiſtrate cannot judge, becauſe he knows not the Heart of Man; is a Father better qualified to judge the Heart of his Son or Daughter than the Magiſtrate is to judge the Hearts of his Subjects? In every View the Objections are equally frivolous, or equally ſtrong in both Caſes.

From the Text, thus opened and explained, I ſhall take an Occaſion to inquire, Wherein the Care of Religion, as well public as private, doth conſiſt; and to juſtify the Means which are neceſſary to the Support of it.

If we conſider the Nature and Diſpoſition of Mankind, we ſhall eaſily perceive that two Things are eſpecially neceſſary to guard the Practice of Virtue and Religion, Inſtruction and Correction: One, a proper Remedy for the Weakneſs of the Underſtanding; the other, for the Perverſeneſs of the Will. Where theſe two are joined together, where the ſame Perſon has a Right to inſtruct and correct, the Inſtruction is properly authoritative; and this is the Caſe both of Parents and Magiſtrates: And

therefore *Abraham*'s Care for his Family, which without Doubt included Inſtruction, is expreſſed by the Word *Command*; *He will command his Children and his Houſhold, that they ſhall keep the Way of the Lord.* And the ſame Precept, given by God to the Children of *Iſrael* for the Inſtruction of their Poſterity, and which is called *teaching* their Children in *Deut.* xi. 19. is, in ch. xxxii. ver. 46. called *commanding* their Children: *And he ſaid unto them, Set your Hearts unto all the Words which I teſtify among you this Day; which ye ſhall command your Children to obſerve, to do all the Words of this Law.*

This Duty Princes cannot perform perſonally to all their People; and therefore there has been an Order of Men ſet apart to this Work in every civilized Nation in the World: And, upon the Foot of Natural Religion, there is no Queſtion to be made but that the ſupreme Power in every Nation has a full Right to appoint and conſtitute theſe public Teachers and Miniſters of Religion. The People of *Rome* had as good a Title to chuſe Prieſts as to chuſe Conſuls; and had their Religion been right, no Fault could have been found in the Conſtitution of their Prieſthood. But this Right was under

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the Law of *Moſes* limited to one Family; and the Prieſthood under the Goſpel is confined to ſuch Methods of Conveyance as Chriſt and his Apoſtles have appointed or approved: And the Chriſtian Prieſthood being in all Chriſtian Nations owned and eſtabliſhed by the Public, they have the Commiſſion and Authority of the Magiſtrate for the Edification of the People.

The Power of Correction is proper to be preſerved in the Hand of the Magiſtrate, and is never better applied than for the Puniſhment of Wickedneſs and Vice, and for the Maintenance of true Religion and Virtue.

As theſe Methods are neceſſary for the promoting and preſerving the Virtue of Nations, and eſtabliſhing public Happineſs and Tranquillity, which ſo much depend on it, ſo are they likewiſe for the good Government and Improvement of private Families: And every Father, by natural Right, has Power to inſtruct, and within proper Reſtraints to uſe Correction, for the Good and Benefit of thoſe under his Care.

As to Inſtruction, conſidered ſeparate from Correction, he muſt be a great Friend to Libertiniſm who has any thing to object againſt it.

it. Some have thought, that ſince God has given all Men Reaſon to direct them, all Men ſhould be left to their Reaſon to diſcover the general Truths of Religion and Morality, without having any Principles or Notions inſtilled into them by others; which they eſteem as ſo many Prejudices only. But, not to inſiſt how contrary this is to all the Rules and Precepts of Scripture relating to the Duty of Fathers and Mothers, and to the Practice of all Nations, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that had God intended that all Men ſhould be left to the Diſcoveries of their own Reaſon in Matters of Duties, it had been neceſſary for him to have ſupplied all Men with Leiſure for Speculation, as well as with Reaſon: For Experience ſhews that the generality of Men, in the preſent State of Things, are not able, for Want of Leiſure and Education, to be their own Maſters: So far from it, that, in conjunction with all the Helps that are at preſent afforded them, great Numbers continue ignorant to a Degree hardly to be imagined; and were theſe Helps to be removed, we could expect nothing in the room of them but the groſſeſt Ignorance and Superſtition.

If

If Men have ſo much Reaſon as to be able to diſcover their Duty without Aſſiſtance, as thoſe who would deliver them from the Bondage of Inſtruction ſuppoſe them to have, it is certain they have Reaſon enough to diſtinguiſh between Truth and Falſehood, when propoſed to them by others, and are not therefore in more Danger of being betrayed into acting contrary to their Reaſon by Inſtruction, than by being left to themſelves: And as for thoſe who have not Reaſon enough to enable them to direct themſelves, or to make them capable of receiving Inſtructions from others, they are fit only to be governed by other Methods.

It is very certain that general Errors have been perpetuated by traditionary Inſtruction, as well as general Truths: But if for this Reaſon an End muſt be put to all Inſtruction, what one Thing of uſe can be preſerved in Life, if we will be ſo fair as to carry the Argument to its full Extent? Many die daily by Eating and Drinking: What then? Muſt the World be ſtarved, becauſe you can tell us of ſome who have ſuffered by Intemperance? or is there a greater Reaſon to leave the World in Ignorance, becauſe

becauſe ſome through falſe Teachers have been miſerably deceived?

But the ſtrongeſt Objections lie againſt the Uſe of Correction in Matters of Religion. All are ſo ſenſible of the Neceſſity of Puniſhments to preſerve the Peace and Order of the World, and to protect the Innocent againſt the Violence of Sinners, that the Magiſtrate is allowed on all hands a Right to puniſh all Crimes which are prejudicial to the Public, or to the Intereſt of private Men. A Conceſſion this not to be deſpiſed in Behalf of Religion; for our Duty to God does ſo concur in all things with our Duty to our Neighbour, that he who puniſhes Offences and Injuries offered to Men, will undoubtedly ſo far puniſh Vice and Immorality. And this Conceſſion being made, the Plea for excluding the Magiſtrate from Matters of Religion can only affect ſuch Caſes where the Honour of God alone is concerned; for all Offences againſt Men are allowed to be puniſhed. There remain only then the Offences againſt God to be exempted from the Terrors of this World; ſuch as Profaneneſs, Impiety, and the like; upon which they think there ought to be no Reſtraint from the Magiſtrate.

The great Reaſon aſſigned for all this is, that Puniſhments inflicted by the temporal Power cannot make Men religious; they can only conſtrain Men to a Compliance with the Law in their outward Behaviour, but cannot reach to the purifying their Hearts and Conſciences, in the Clearneſs and Integrity of which the Virtue of Religion does conſiſt.

But it ought, in the firſt place, to be conſidered, that ſuch Impiety is truly prejudicial to the Public, as it tends, by the Contagion of ill Example, to corrupt the Members of the Commonwealth. The Reverence Men have for God, is the very beſt Foundation of Obedience to temporal Governors: This makes them willing to diſcharge their Duty faithfully to the Public, and to private Men. Take away this Reverence and Regard for God, and few will ſee any Reaſon to obey the Laws of Man any farther than is neceſſary to their own Security. But what an Alteration would it make in a Government, were the Subjects, inſtead of being willing to obey, to lay hold on all Opportunities of offending with Impunity? No Vigilance of the Magiſtrate could be ſufficient to reſtrain the Iniquity of Multitudes inclined to do

Evil. Whoever therefore makes way for this Corruption of Manners, ſo prejudicial to the Welfare and Happineſs of Mankind, is liable to Puniſhment even as an Enemy to the State; and the Conceſſion made the Magiſtrate to puniſh Offences againſt the Public, will entitle him to inflict Vengeance upon thoſe who openly affront the Majeſty of God, either by denying his Being, or his Government of the World.

But, ſecondly, it is want of the Knowledge of human Nature, which leads Men to make this Objection: For though it is very true, that the Sinner, who abſtains from Vice or Immorality merely out of the Fear of temporal Puniſhment, cannot be ſaid to act upon a religious Principle in ſo doing, or to render an acceptable Service to God; yet we muſt conſider not only the immediate Influence which Puniſhments have, but the Conſequence which they are naturally apt to produce. If you keep a Sinner from Vice through Fear at firſt, it will by degrees grow habitual to him to do well; his Reliſh for Vice will abate, and by the Length of Practice he will come to take Pleaſure in Virtue, how uneaſy ſoever it might ſit upon him at firſt; and whenever this Change is effected,

effected, the Man is truly religious: For what is a religious Diſpoſition, unleſs this, to take Pleaſure in doing well? This happy Change often proceeds from leſs happy Beginnings. We ſee in Children every Day, that their Propenſity to ſome Vices is by degrees wholly removed by the watchful Eye and Hand of a good Parent; and we may obſerve the ſame Effect in Men from like Cauſes. And will you ſay, that when a Man is grown to be habitually virtuous, that he has no true Religion in him, becauſe he was at firſt reclaimed from Vice by temporal Fears? If not, you muſt allow that theſe Fears are not deſtructive of Religion.

But I have ſaid enough to ſhew, and alſo to juſtify, the Means neceſſary to be uſed in diſcharging the Duty recommended in the Text. And I ſhall apply myſelf, in what remains, to exhort every Man to do his Part, and to make all, as far as his Influence reaches, *keep the Way of the Lord, and do Juſtice and Judgment.*

The Magiſtrate is, in the firſt place, concerned to be watchful over the Manners of the People, and to be jealous for the Honour of God. In this conſiſts the Stability of Nations; for, *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, but*

but Sin is the Reproach of the People. This Caſe deſcends from the ſupreme Head of Juſtice to every Officer of the Kingdom, in Proportion to the Power communicated to him; and every Magiſtrate, who connives at open Impiety, is falſe both to God and the King. But I ſhall preſs this Part of the Exhortation no farther, which may perhaps concern but very few in this Place. But give me Leave to add under this Head, that private Men, who are veſted with no Part of the public Authority, are capable of doing great Service even by ſhewing themſelves pleaſed that others ſhould do their Duty. It is a great Diſcouragement to Magiſtrates, when they have not only the Violence of Sinners to contend with, but alſo the Reſentments and Indignation of the Innocent. A Conſideration that ought to be maturely weighed, in an Age that is not, I am ſure, too good to ſtand in need of Reformation.

Next to the Magiſtrate, the chief Care of Virtue and Religion lies upon Fathers and Maſters of Families. The Kingdom is one great Family, and it is made up of the ſmall ones; and if due Care be taken in private Families for the Government and Inſtruction

of Youth, the Public will ſoon ſee and feel the happy Effects of it. Permit me therefore to remind all Parents of the Duty they owe to God, their Country, and their Children, to take care that thoſe, who are by the Laws of God and Man committed to their Government, be virtuouſly educated, and inſtructed in the Way of the Lord. This God requires of you; his Creatures they are, whom you call your Children: they owe Obedience to him in the firſt place, and it is his Authority which you exerciſe over them; and if they periſh for want of timely Inſtruction and Correction, he will require their Souls at your Hands.

Parents have a Truſt likewiſe repoſed in them by their Country. There is nothing of greater Conſequence to the Public, than that the Youth of the Nation ſhould be trained up to Virtue and Induſtry; that the Seeds of Religion ſhould be ſown betimes in their Hearts, and cheriſhed by proper Encouragement. Theſe are the only Methods from which we can have any Hopes to ſee our Country ſupplied with honeſt and worthy Men. It is but reaſonable to expect from Parents, that they ſhould out of natural Affection ſeek to promote the Happineſs of

their Children; and ſince the ſame Care, which is neceſſary to form them to be good Subjects, is alſo neceſſary to lay the Foundation of their own Happineſs and Proſperity in the World, this Care is wholly entruſted to Parents; who ought to look upon themſelves as reſponſible to their Country for the future Behaviour of their Children.

But farther: If Parents would but conſider the Condition of thoſe Children whom they have brought into the World, they would find themſelves obliged, by the ſtrongeſt Ties of natural Affection, to guard them againſt the certain Miſeries of this Life, and of the next, by ſeaſoning their Minds with Principles of Virtue and Religion. How wretched, do you think, are thoſe Parents, who live to ſee their Children made miſerable by Vice? And what an Addition muſt it be to their Misfortune, if it is attended with this Reflection, that it was want of early Care in them, which led the Way to this Ruin and Miſery. How often is it, that Men remember with Deteſtation the Negligence and Indulgence of their Parents, when either they find themſelves uſeleſs to the World and themſelves, for want of that early Care which ſhould have been beſtowed on them;

them; or expoſed to Miſery, to an untimely End, or to a Life of Shame and Reproach, by thoſe evil Inclinations, which grew headſtrong in them for want of being pruned in their tender Years!

You ſee then what ſtrong Obligations Parents are under to be diligent in the Diſcharge of this Duty; which they owe to God, their Country, and their Children: And we might promiſe ourſelves happy Days to come, were there a Performance anſwerable to theſe Obligations. In many Caſes indeed Parents are diſabled from diſcharging this Duty, through Ignorance and Poverty; and what muſt become of ſuch Families, where the Fathers and Mothers can ſcarcely, with all their Labour, provide Food and Raiment; ſo far are they from being able to attend to the Education and Inſtruction of their Children? And this Neceſſity of many poor Families among us gave riſe to the Inſtitution of public Schools, maintained by Contributions for the Inſtruction and Education of the Poor. An Inſtitution which, however ſerviceable to the Poor of our Country, is calculated to promote nobler Views than thoſe of private Intereſt and Advantage

to any one Set of Men, and tends directly to the public Good, and the Benefit of all.

The Paſſions of Men conſidered, it is not to be expected, that thoſe who are permitted to go wild and untamed in their Youth, ſhould prove harmleſs, much leſs uſeful and beneficial to Society in their more advanced Years. Neceſſity is a great Temptation to Wickedneſs, and leads Men to uſe Fraud or Violence to ſupport their Vices; and if they have nothing but their corrupt Affections to direct them, can it be hoped that they ſhould withſtand theſe Temptations? Idle and undiſciplined Boys commonly prove looſe and vicious young Men, and often fall a Sacrifice to the Severity of the Law before they become old ones. Thieves and Robbers muſt be puniſhed, or the Innocent muſt be ruined; ſo far the Rigor of the Law is juſtified: But is it not a deplorable Caſe, and to a Chriſtian Country a great Reproach, that great Care ſhould be taken to puniſh Wickedneſs, and little or none to prevent it? And yet this is the Caſe, where the Inſtruction of the Poor is neglected, and they are left to purſue the corrupt Inclinations of Nature to their own Deſtruction. This Miſchief is in ſome Meaſure provided for by the Charity-Schools;

and

and by breeding up the Poor to be honeſt and diligent, the Rich are ſaved from the Violence of wicked neceſſitous Men; the Poor are reſcued from Wickedneſs, and the Puniſhments due to it; and ſo many uſeful and beneficial Hands are gained to the Public.

Farther, Not only the good Order and Peace of civil Society is provided for by theſe charitable Inſtitutions, but alſo the Peace of the Church of Chriſt; by training up Youth to be orderly and well behaved Members of it: An End which every Chriſtian, who has any Regard for his holy Profeſſion, muſt take Pleaſure in promoting. But carry this Conſideration into its remoter Conſequences, the Happineſs to which many Souls may arrive through the Influence which a pious Education may have upon the whole Courſe of their Lives; and nothing will be wanting to give us a juſt Conception of the Uſefulneſs of this Deſign, or to encourage us to be liberal and generous in contributing to the Support of it. If every Gift beſtowed for the Honour of God, or for the Good of our Country, or for the ſake of a poor Brother, ſhall have its Reward; how abundantly ſhall this Charity be recompenſed, which

which ſerves all theſe Purpoſes at once; which brings Maintenance to the Poor, Inſtruction to the Ignorant, and opens to the Miſerable a Way to Happineſs; which provides for the Order of Civil Government, and the Peace of Chriſt's Church on Earth; referring all to the Glory and Honour of him, who is Lord of the World which now is, and of that which is to come? Give therefore according as God has bleſſed you: Here are many who aſk your Help; the Poor, your Country, the Church of Chriſt, which intreats for theſe her helpleſs Children: And One there is who looks on, and will not forget the Love you ſhew to the meaneſt of his Members for his ſake, Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord: *To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all Honour and Glory, henceforth, and for evermore.* Amen.

F I N I S.

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